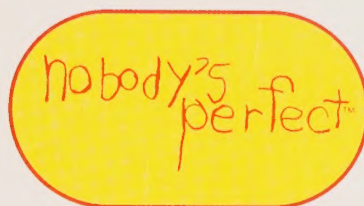




Working with Nobody's Perfect

A Facilitator's Guide



Third Edition
2000

Canada

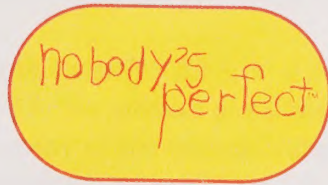


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Working with Nobody's Perfect

A Facilitator's Guide



Third Edition
2000

Canada

Nobody's Perfect was originally developed by Health Canada in collaboration with the Departments of Health in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador.

The *Nobody's Perfect* Program is coordinated through a National Office by the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs and the Canadian Institute of Child Health.

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1-800-565-7757 for fax orders by Visa or MasterCard

Internet: <http://publications.pwgsc.ca>

Nobody's Perfect materials can also be ordered through local bookstores.

Promotional brochures and posters for *Nobody's Perfect* are available free from Health Canada Publications, telephone: (613) 954-5995.

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Our mission is to help the people of Canada maintain and improve their health.

Health Canada

The opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official views of Health Canada.

Acknowledgement and Appreciation

Since its inception in 1984, many parents, facilitators, trainers, writers and consultants have contributed their ideas, effort and experience to the development of all aspects of the Nobody's Perfect program.

This third edition of the *Working with Nobody's Perfect: A Facilitator's Guide* (previously titled "Nobody's Perfect Leader's Guide") is the product of a Canada-wide process of consultation and collaboration and incorporates many of the lessons learned and insights gained by Nobody's Perfect facilitators since the second edition was published in 1988.

We'd like to express our appreciation to all of the facilitators and trainers whose generous response to our request for information and suggestions has made this expanded and updated Guide possible. Experience is the best teacher and we thank you for sharing what you've learned.

We'd also like to thank the many people we consulted during the revision process. Your expertise and advice were of enormous help.

Working with Nobody's Perfect: A Facilitator's Guide also owes a great deal to the hard work of the Nobody's Perfect Leader's Guide Revision Advisory Committee, which reviewed and revised the many drafts of this edition. Our committee included Nobody's Perfect trainers, facilitators and consultants, as well as representatives of Nobody's Perfect Coordinating Committees. They are:

- **Sylvie Choquette**, CLSC Vallée-de-la-Lièvre, Buckingham, Quebec
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- **Sandy Wrightman**, Counsellor, Consultant, Trainer, Grantham's Landing, British Columbia

Sandy Wrightman's contribution to this revision must be particularly noted. The project was coordinated by **Janice MacAulay**.

The *Working with Nobody's Perfect: A Facilitator's Guide* was written by **Janis Wood Catano**.

We would also like to acknowledge our appreciation for the work done on previous editions of this resource, which provided a solid base on which to build.

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- Jane Oram, Program Officer; Coordinator, Training Manual and Leader's Guide, Atlantic Regional Office, Health and Welfare Canada, Halifax

The 1986 edition was written by Sally Ross.

Preface

Working with Nobody's Perfect: A Facilitator's Guide to has been developed as a practical resource for facilitators who are learning to work with Nobody's Perfect. It is an essential resource for Nobody's Perfect Facilitator's Training and provides an ongoing reference for facilitators.

The 11 sections in the Guide provide background information, guidelines for facilitating, advice for planning and organizing Nobody's Perfect programs, tools to assist your work and much more. The sections are:

- Section 1: What is Nobody's Perfect?
- Section 2: Key concepts
- Section 3: What is a facilitator?
- Section 4: What does a facilitator do?
- Section 5: Practical approaches for working with parents
- Section 6: Organizing Nobody's Perfect programs
- Section 7: Planning a Nobody's Perfect program
- Section 8: Planning each session
- Section 9: Activities and tools
- Section 10: Using Nobody's Perfect in one-on-one sessions
- Section 11: Checklists and forms

The information in this Guide is a place to start learning and growing as a facilitator. You'll find that just as each parent is unique, every group has its own personality. What works well with one group may fizzle with another. Some groups will almost seem to facilitate themselves, while others will call on all your skills as a facilitator.

Every group offers you the opportunity to enlarge your skills and your understanding of the parents in your community. Working in a participant-centred program often means that the facilitator gets as much out of the process as the parents.

This edition of the Guide has been built on the experience of Nobody's Perfect facilitators over the past 15 years. Some of what they've told us is reflected in the text, some has been quoted directly. We hope that in addition to the information they've given us, we've managed to convey some of the fun they've had facilitating Nobody's Perfect and the respect and affection they feel for the parents they work with.

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A Facilitator's Guide to Working with Nobody's Perfect

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Section 1

**What is
Nobody's Perfect?**



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What is Nobody's Perfect?

Who is Nobody's Perfect for?

Nobody's Perfect is a program for parents of children from birth through age five. It is designed to meet the needs of parents who are:

- young;
- single;
- isolated (because they have no friends or family nearby or because they live in a rural area); or
- who have low income or little formal education.

Nobody's Perfect has been developed for a particular group of parents – those who for one or another reason have little access to other resources. These parents may have difficulty finding resources for several reasons:

- They can't afford to participate in some programs, either because there is a fee involved or because they can't afford the costs of transportation and child care.
- They don't have the level of education or literacy they need to find, read and apply most of the printed material that is available on parenting.
- They are isolated and may not know where to look or who to talk to for information about the confusing and challenging job of parenting.
- They are young and feel that most parenting programs don't apply to them.
- They are afraid that they'll be judged or labelled as bad parents if they ask for support or help.
- They don't think most parenting programs are culturally relevant to them.

Nobody's Perfect gives parents a safe place to meet others with children of the same age and with whom they share interests and concerns. Nobody's Perfect programs are always free of charge.

Though participants may differ in age or cultural background from one Nobody's Perfect program to another, all of the parents who participate in Nobody's Perfect have several things in common.

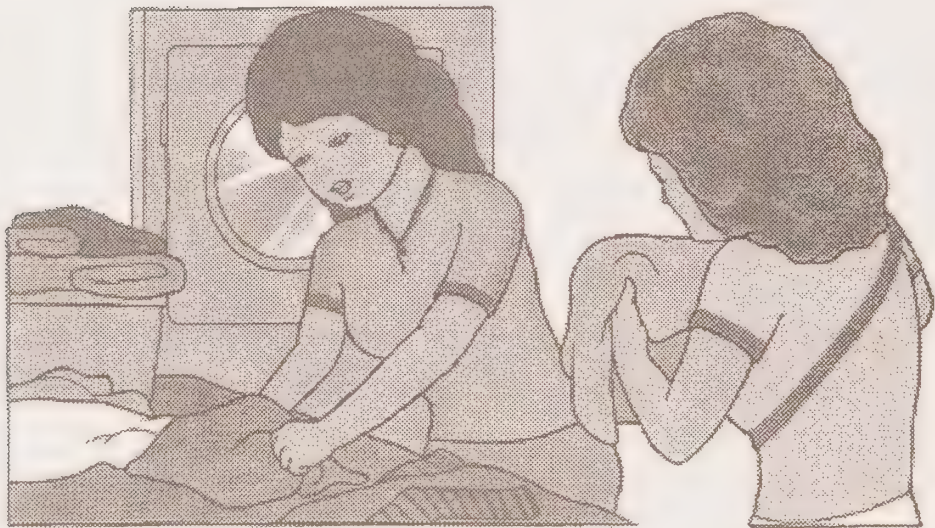
- They want to be there. Nobody's Perfect is a voluntary program – no one is required or forced to participate.
- They want what's best for their children.
- They want to be good parents.

Nobody's Perfect does **not** teach one "right" way to parent. It helps parents to recognize their strengths and to find positive ways to raise healthy, happy children.

The program is not intended for families in crisis or those with serious problems.

"Nobody's Perfect accepted me as who I am and helped me learn who I can be."

Parent

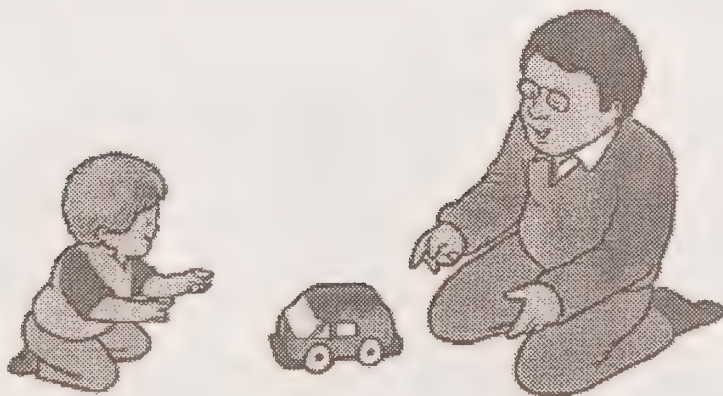


Some background information

Nobody's Perfect was developed in the early 1980s by Health Canada (then known as Health and Welfare Canada) and the Departments of Health of the four Atlantic provinces: New Brunswick; Newfoundland and Labrador; Nova Scotia; and Prince Edward Island. The program was introduced nationally in 1987. Today, Nobody's Perfect programs are offered in every Canadian province and territory. Nobody's Perfect parent materials were updated in 1997 and are published in French and English, as well as other languages. Parent materials are also available on request in formats designed for parents with hearing or visual impairments.

Nobody's Perfect has been successful since it was introduced. Since that time, over 5,000 community workers, parents and public health nurses have been trained as Nobody's Perfect facilitators and many thousands of parents have participated in the program. Training programs provide information about delivering the Nobody's Perfect program and develop skills for helping adults learn in group settings. Networks in every province and territory provide ongoing support for facilitators.

Since its beginning, Nobody's Perfect has had a profound impact on the development of community-based parenting education in Canada. Its participant-centred approach, based on respect and support for parents, has been adapted by many other programs.



Nobody's Perfect beliefs

Nobody's Perfect is based on a few simple beliefs:

- Parents love their children and want to be good parents. They want their children to be healthy and happy.
- Nobody is born knowing how to be a parent. All parents need information and support. Being part of a supportive group can help parents to recognize their strengths and understand their needs.
- Helping parents to meet their own needs is an important step in helping them to meet their children's needs.
- Parents appreciate practical, positive and inexpensive ideas and approaches.

Nobody's Perfect is "participant-centred." It is based on the understanding that adults learn best:

- When their background and life experiences are valued and respected.
- When they have a voice in deciding what they'll learn and the program is based on what they want and need to learn.
- When they are part of a supportive group.
- When the program allows them to build confidence and self-esteem by offering opportunities to try new skills and behaviours.

The goal of Nobody's Perfect is to give parents a safe place to meet and a chance to think about their lives, their children and their role as parents. Parents can use the program to:

- Learn more about their children's health, safety and behaviour.
- Build on the parenting skills they have, and learn and practise new ones.
- Build self-esteem and confidence as parents by recognizing their own strengths and abilities.
- Get to know other parents, relax and have some fun while learning.
- Make connections with other parents and begin to see each other as sources of help and support.

"I would recommend it to friends – a way to make new friends and find mutual support."

Parent

How does Nobody's Perfect work?

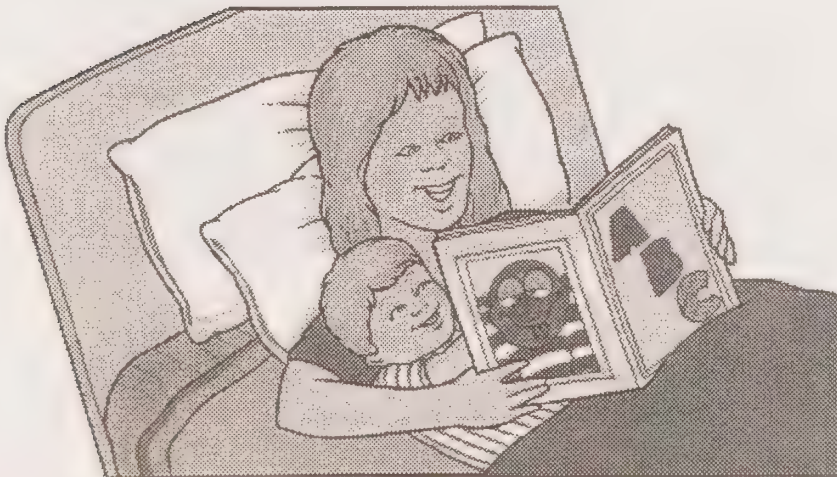
The Nobody's Perfect program builds on what parents already know and do for themselves and their children. It starts with the parents' own experiences and interests and gives them an active role in the learning process. Nobody's Perfect helps parents build networks among themselves and encourages them to see one another as sources of advice and support.

The Nobody's Perfect program is designed to be flexible and can be tailored to meet the needs of both parents and organizations which sponsor programs. Nobody's Perfect is usually offered as a series of group sessions held over a period of six to eight weeks. Each session is about two hours long. The series can be expanded to cover a longer period (for example, 10 to 12 weeks) and can have longer sessions (for example, 3 hours each). It can also be offered in a compressed form, as day-long sessions held over one or several weekends. Nobody's Perfect can also be used one-on-one with individual parents.

The program has been offered in a broad range of settings and used by many different kinds of parents, including immigrant, Aboriginal and young parents.

"Adult education really works! It was exciting to see things brought out and comments made and to see changes parents could see happening to themselves. Instead of me giving all the information it came from the parents – they took over."

Nobody's Perfect Facilitator



Is Nobody's Perfect effective?

Yes, it is. Nobody's Perfect is effective for parents, for facilitators and for communities.

Nobody's Perfect is effective for parents

Nobody's Perfect has proven to be an effective program for parents who have less access to parenting programs and support. Several major evaluation and impact studies have found that parents who participate in a Nobody's Perfect program feel less isolated, are more confident and strengthen their parenting skills.

"I learned you're not alone. Others are going through the same problems."

Parent

"I learned about myself. I learned to listen to my children instead of me talking out first. They've calmed down and I've calmed down since taking Nobody's Perfect."

Parent

Nobody's Perfect is effective for facilitators

Facilitators find that the skills and insights they develop working with Nobody's Perfect are helpful in other areas of their lives and careers. Nobody's Perfect Facilitator Training builds skills and confidence and facilitators find it to be a valuable resource. Many facilitators report that the skills they learn through Nobody's Perfect have an impact on their work and their daily life.

"I never dreamed that the Nobody's Perfect Facilitator Training I did in 1986 would be so great! I have facilitated many Nobody's Perfect parent sessions and have since become a trainer. I use the skills I've learned through Nobody's Perfect training in lots of other ways. Practice with listening skills, ideas for working with groups, giving feedback, how to avoid giving advice – all of these are a part of Nobody's Perfect training and are useful in many areas of life and work."

Trainer/Facilitator

Nobody's Perfect is effective for communities

Through participation in Nobody's Perfect, parents learn about and seek out other resources and supports in their community. They also get to know and trust other parents and begin to build support networks that strengthen individuals and communities.

"It works. It works because it allows parents to work with one another and come up with their own solutions."

Nobody's Perfect Trainer

"It works because it provides parents with opportunities to meet other parents, support each other and make friendships. It broadens families' support networks."

Nobody's Perfect Trainer



Program materials

Nobody's Perfect is a comprehensive program with materials designed to support both parents and those who work with them.

Parent materials

Five basic, easy-to-read books form the core of Nobody's Perfect. All of the other program materials have been based on these books.

The books are not intended to provide "cookbook" solutions to every possible situation. Instead, they are designed to give parents information and help them develop effective ways to cope with the stresses and difficult situations they face as parents.

Evaluations have shown that parents like and use these books. Over half of the parents were still using at least one of the books six months after the program had ended.

The topics covered in the five parent books are:

BEHAVIOUR

- how to tell the difference between loving and spoiling
- how to encourage cooperative behaviour
- how to handle common behaviour problems



BODY

- how to keep a child healthy
- how to recognize the signs of illness
- what to do for common childhood illnesses



MIND

- how a child's mind and feelings develop
- how to encourage a child to learn
- how to help a child develop through play

PARENTS

- how parents can look after their own needs
- how to find and choose different kinds of child care
- how to find support and resources in the community



SAFETY

- what causes injuries
- how to prevent injuries
- what to do for specific injuries

"I like the parent books because they are easy to understand and I can keep them."

Parent

All participants in a Nobody's Perfect group receive the **Parent Kit** free of charge. The **Parent Kit** contains:

- The five parent books
- A chart showing infant development from birth to age two
- A growth chart for two- to five-year-olds
- Two stickers for emergency telephone numbers

Parent materials also include **Safe/Sorry**, a game which emphasizes messages in the SAFETY book.

Materials for facilitators

In addition to the parent materials, Nobody's Perfect includes training and support materials for facilitators working with Nobody's Perfect parents. These are:

- **Working with Nobody's Perfect: A Facilitator's Guide.** The Guide is designed to help with planning, facilitating and evaluating Nobody's Perfect in both group and one-on-one situations.
- A **Promotional Poster** to advertise the Nobody's Perfect program and to post the date and place of a specific session.
- **Invitation Cards**, a friendly way to describe the program and remind parents of when and where their sessions will be held.
- A **Promotional Brochure** which describes the program and its components. This brochure was designed for use with organizations and professionals and is not meant to be given to parents.

Who sponsors Nobody's Perfect programs?

Nobody's Perfect programs are offered in communities by a wide range of groups and organizations. Sponsoring organizations have included:

- regional and community health authorities
- family resource centres
- community health centres and CLSCs (centre local de services communautaires)
- health and community service agencies
- adolescent health centres
- Aboriginal communities
- Aboriginal Head Start sites
- multicultural and immigrant organizations
- high schools
- child care centres
- community programs for pregnant teens and teen mothers
- shelters for women experiencing family violence
- correctional facilities for men, women and young offenders

Nobody's Perfect is flexible enough to allow sponsoring organizations to define their own participants within the range of parents for whom Nobody's Perfect has been designed. For example, a sponsor may choose to define "young" as parents who are 25 years of age or younger. Another sponsor may define "young" as 15 years or younger. Some agencies may concentrate on reaching single mothers or fathers. Others may focus on mothers in conflict with the law, parents new to Canada or Aboriginal parents.

Section 2

Key concepts



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Key concepts

Respecting values

Values are the beliefs we hold closest to our hearts. Our values are strongly influenced by our life experience and the important people in our lives.

We look at everything through our values and they guide all of our actions. We use our values as a standard on which we base our judgements. However, for many of us, our values are so much a part of us that we don't think about them consciously. Often, we notice our own values only when we disagree with someone or something. Many disagreements are the result of a difference in values.

Each person's values are unique. Although people who share a culture or a community may have very similar values, no two people's values are exactly alike. Within any group, there is likely to be a wide range of values.

As a facilitator, it is important to know what your values are. Remember, your values are just that – YOUR values. They are not the only values. They are not the best values. They are simply your values. Be clear about what you believe so that you don't – consciously or unconsciously – promote your own values and put down the values of others.

Be alert for times when you agree with some parents and not with others in the group, or when group members take sides on a deeply felt values issue. The facilitator's role is to remain neutral and to assist the group to find the common ground where everyone's beliefs and values are respected.

Nobody's Perfect is not about changing values. It is about acknowledging the values – and the diversity of values – in any group. The focus is on examining the impact values have on the choices parents make everyday.

One of the strengths of Nobody's Perfect is that it offers parents opportunities to explore their values and understand how values influence parenting and other aspects of their lives. The point of a discussion about values is to help everyone to recognize their own values, not to "convert" parents to any particular set of values. Looking closely at values offers an opportunity to question them, to expand them or to affirm them.

Understanding your own values and respecting the values of others are key concepts in Nobody's Perfect. You will be addressing values at some level in every Nobody's Perfect session because so many parenting decisions and issues are based on values. Exploring Values in Section 4 offers some specific ideas about how you can help yourself and the parents in your group become more aware of values and their influence on parenting.

Experiential learning

Nobody's Perfect is based on the concept of "experiential learning." This means that Nobody's Perfect does not tell parents what they should do or how they should do it. This program offers experiences through which parents gain information and insight and apply what they've learned to many areas of their lives.

The process of experiential learning involves recognizing and examining experiences by asking (and answering) a series of questions:

What? (NOTICING the experience)

What happened?

When did this first happen?

What was said? By you? By others?

What did you see?

What happened first? Then what happened?

In what order did things happen?

At what time of day did it happen?

What else was happening at the time?

Who was there?

Who was not there?

Notice questions involve all the senses.

So what? (RELATING the meaning of the experience to you personally)

What are you becoming aware of?

What does this remind you of?

What meaning do you begin to see here?

What do you begin to know about yourself in this situation?

"Relating" questions connect to feelings and meaning.

Now what? (APPLYING what you've learned from the experience)

Based on your experience, what you noticed and what it means to you, what new options are you aware of?

What do you think you will do now?

Do you see other situations in which this new awareness might be useful to you?

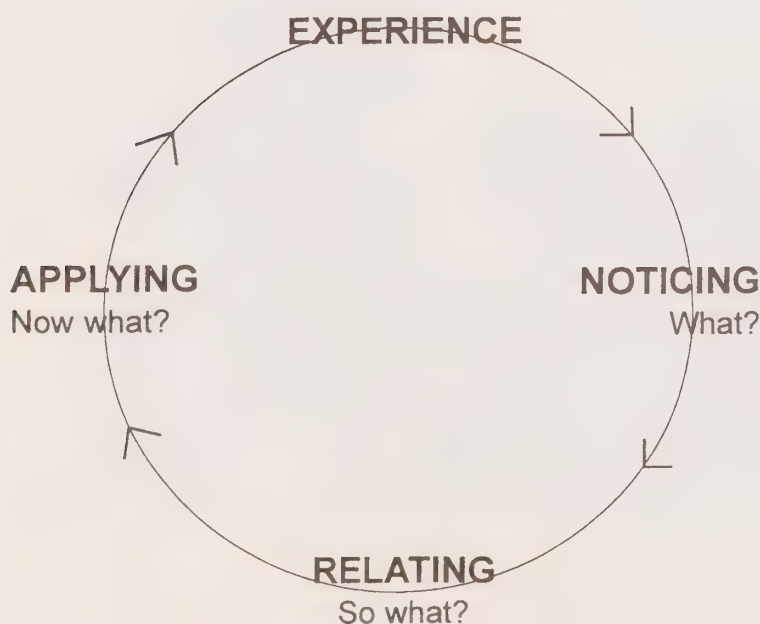
These questions will help you separate what actually happened (the facts) from how you feel. When you can separate the events from the emotions, you're in a better position to apply what you've learned from the experience.

Experiential learning is circular:

- Every day is full of experiences.
- Every experience offers an opportunity for learning.
- Everything you learn leads to new experiences.

The process of applying the experiential learning approach to a specific experience is also circular. This is sometimes called the experiential learning cycle.

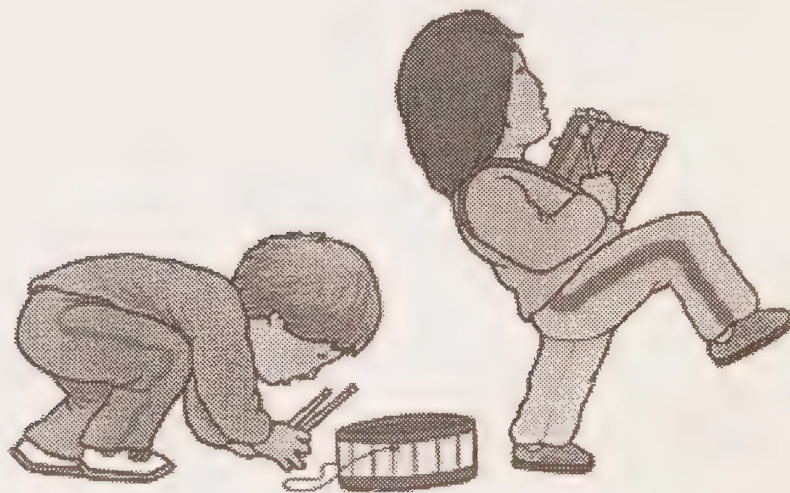
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE



As a facilitator, your job is to involve parents in a range of activities and encourage them to notice, consider and apply what they learn from these experiences.

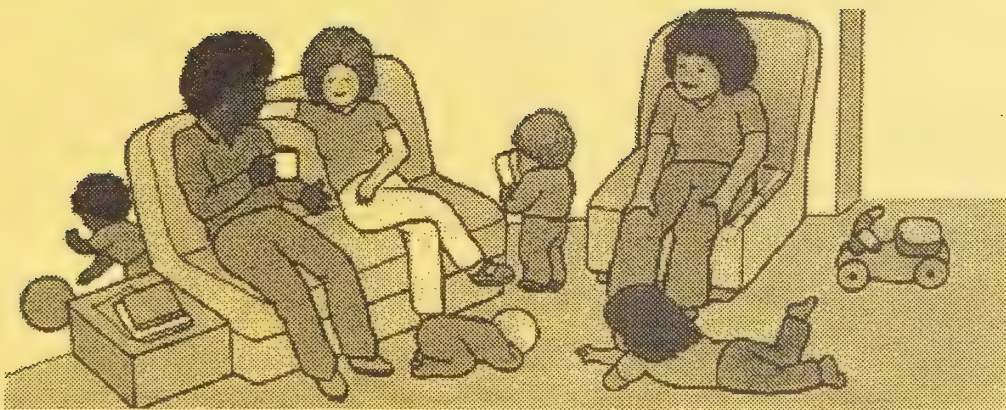
Be aware that, while you can plan an activity, you can't plan (or predict) the experience that a participant will have as a result of that activity. This is because each parent is building on a unique foundation, one that is based on their own strengths and the lifetime of experiences they bring to the program. Each parent will understand and apply experiences in ways that meet their own particular needs.

Experiential learning is a key concept in Nobody's Perfect. Experiential learning is a tool we can use to become more aware of our experiences and to understand them in a way that will increase our confidence in what we're doing or bring new insights that may lead us to do things differently. Since everything that parents do while participating in Nobody's Perfect is an experience, every session will present opportunities for parents to notice, consider and apply what they learn.



Section 3

What is a facilitator?



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What is a facilitator?

Nobody's Perfect programs are organized and run by a person whose job is to make it easy for parents to come to the sessions, participate in the program and gain useful information and skills they take away with them.

The job title for someone who makes things easier is "facilitator." In a sense, the Nobody's Perfect program is a tool parents use to build on what they already know and do. The facilitator's job is to make it easy for them to use this tool effectively.

Before you begin working with parents, the first step in "making things easy" is understanding exactly what a facilitator is and isn't.

- ***Facilitators are equals, not superiors.***

Facilitators must like, respect and enjoy the parents they work with. They must show this liking and respect in what they say and what they do. A facilitator is not "the boss." Facilitators are the equals of the parents in the group and need to see themselves that way. That is, they know that while they may be different from the parents in some ways, and have a different role within the group, they are not better or better parents than the parents in the group.

- ***Facilitators are learners, not teachers.***

There is no one "right" way to parent. The facilitator's job is not to "teach" people how to be good parents. Facilitators do not have all the answers.

Facilitating a Nobody's Perfect group means working with parents to find out what they want, develop ways to share ideas and information, and discover new approaches. Both facilitators and parents are learners and can learn from each other.

- ***Facilitators are listeners, not talkers.***

A group of people sitting quietly in rows listening to a facilitator talk are not just bored – they're also not learning. Adults learn best when they participate actively. This means that they need to *do* things – to talk and make a contribution to the group. Facilitators who do all of the talking are not helping parents to build their skills and confidence. They're giving the participants the idea that the facilitators are the ones with the answers. A facilitator's job is to help parents feel comfortable enough to speak, to listen to what they say, to learn from them, and to help them learn from each other.

- ***Facilitators are supporters, not leaders.***

The facilitator's role is to help parents take responsibility and control – in their lives and in the group. The facilitator's job is to support parents as they become more confident and trusting in their ability to raise happy, healthy children.

- ***Facilitators bring people together.***

Many of the parents who come to Nobody's Perfect programs are isolated – for one reason or another they don't feel connected to other people or other parents. Part of the facilitator's job is to help parents get to know one another and see each other as sources of friendly advice and support. Facilitators also help parents find ways to stay in touch and support one another after the program is over.

- ***Facilitators help people find their strength as individuals and as a group.***

Everything facilitators do is aimed at helping parents see that they are strong and capable as individuals, and that as a group, they are even stronger. Facilitators empower the group and individuals within it rather than keep all the decisions and power in their own hands.

- ***Facilitators are participant-observers.***

Effective facilitators *observe* the atmosphere in the group and *participate* in ways that support parents and help them learn from their own and each other's experiences. Facilitators participate to get things started, to move them along, to help clarify ideas and to ensure that everyone in the group feels comfortable and included.

This means that facilitators do not work on their own problems and issues in the group. They only use personal stories or experiences as a springboard for discussion or to show parents that everyone has times of doubt and does things that do not work.

Being an effective facilitator requires empathy, skill and practice. And, as is true with being a parent, nobody gets everything right. This Guide and the Facilitator Training Program give you the basic information you need to get started, but on-the-job training is where facilitators learn the most.

"The facilitators are more into listening to us rather than telling us what to do. It is far more helpful – it makes me feel like I can deal with things without being judged."

Parent

Working with a partner: co-facilitation

Although a Nobody's Perfect facilitator can work alone, experience has shown that two facilitators are better than one when working with Nobody's Perfect groups.

Co-facilitators are equal partners, with a respectful and supportive working relationship. Many different kinds of partners can form co-facilitation teams. For example, co-facilitators can be a parent and a professional or can come from different agencies or sponsoring groups. In fact, some of the most effective teams are made up of people with very different backgrounds and skills. Co-facilitation is especially effective when the two partners are able to work together over a long period of time because they are able to get to know, understand and build on one another's strengths.

Strengths of co-facilitating

Evaluations of Nobody's Perfect have shown that facilitators who work with a partner tend to continue facilitating Nobody's Perfect groups for longer periods of time than do facilitators who work alone. The major strength of co-facilitating is that a good partnership can offer practical and emotional support to both of the facilitators.

- ***Two heads – and skill sets – are better than one.*** When the skills of the two facilitators complement one another, their combined talents can produce sessions with depth and balance.
- ***Co-facilitators can learn from each other.*** Discussing possible approaches during planning and talking things over after sessions can give both facilitators a realistic view of how things are progressing. A co-facilitator can also be a source of new ideas, activities and approaches.

Working with a partner can build confidence when a facilitator is just starting out. For example, some facilitators have said that the security of working with a partner gave them courage and confidence to draw on when they needed to lead a session or group on their own.

Experienced facilitators find that working with a less-experienced facilitator gives them an opportunity to look at their own way of doing things with a fresh eye. It can also provide a boost of energy and enthusiasm.

- ***Co-facilitators can offer each other emotional support.*** Working with parents can be emotionally draining. Co-facilitators can share the energy demands that parents can make in learning situations.

- ***Co-facilitators can share the workload.*** There are many details to be considered when planning and organizing a Nobody's Perfect program. Sharing the job can reduce the time and effort involved.
- ***Co-facilitators give parents more rolemodels.*** Co-facilitators model a relationship for the parents in their groups. The way that they work together can show parents that even though two people have different ideas and different ways of approaching a situation, they can find a way to work through their differences. The way that co-facilitators handle disagreements with one another and within the group can show parents that disputes can be resolved with compromise and good humour.

Challenges of co-facilitating

The primary challenge of co-facilitation is the amount of time and energy that can be required to establish a good working relationship.

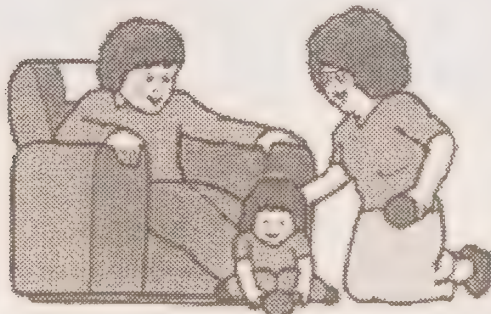
- ***It can be a challenge to establish a partnership of equals.*** It is tempting for a co-facilitator to fall into either a "senior" or "junior" role. This can result in conflict and bad feelings. A more experienced facilitator may have strong opinions about how things should be done, while a less experienced facilitator may too easily give up her own ideas in favour of her partner's.
- ***It can be a challenge to establish a partnership that is cooperative, not competitive.*** Depending on the individuals, there may be competition to be the most popular facilitator with the group.
- ***It can be a challenge to blend two different styles of facilitation.*** The two group facilitators may work at very different paces and have very different styles. For example, one facilitator may be more talkative, or one facilitator may be more comfortable with silence while waiting for a discussion to get under way. Co-facilitators need to acknowledge and appreciate their different styles and work at finding a way to blend them.
- ***It can sometimes take more time to plan and review sessions.*** However, the time spent blending two different styles, outlooks and backgrounds can result in an excellent program.
- ***It can cost more for sponsors to fund two facilitators.*** This can be an obstacle when funds are in short supply, although experience has shown that co-facilitation is more effective in the long run.

Pointers for co-facilitating successfully

- **Talk to one another.** Discuss your past experiences working with groups and your approach as a facilitator. Consult each other as often as possible. Take a few minutes to check in and catch up with one another before each session. After each session, take time to review how things went.

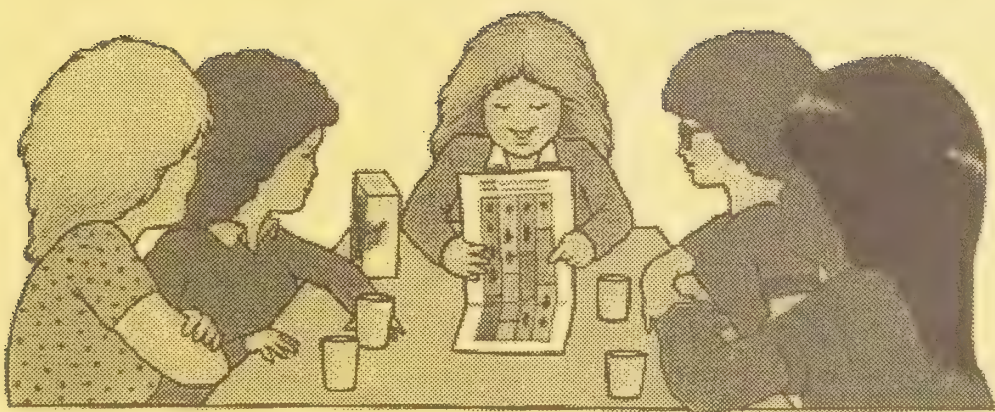
You may not be able to choose your co-facilitator. You may even find yourself working with someone you wouldn't choose as a friend. In this circumstance, it's especially important to talk with each other, get to know one another and build an effective working relationship. You and your partner will be modelling a working relationship for the parents in your groups. Work together to ensure that you model a positive one.

- **Be honest with each other.** Define your strengths and weaknesses for each other. Tell one another the parts of facilitating that you enjoy and the parts you like least.
- **Learn from one another.** Acknowledge and respect the different skill sets each facilitator brings to the program. Take advantage of the opportunity to learn from one another's strengths.
- **Work as a team.**
 - ◆ Set your objectives together – if you both agree on what you would like to accomplish, it will be easier to work together.
 - ◆ Plan your sessions together and decide who will be responsible for which tasks.
 - ◆ Decide when and how to bail one another out – in other words, when the other person should intervene or help out and when she shouldn't.
 - ◆ After each session, take time to talk about how things went before planning the next one.



Section 4

**What does a
facilitator do?**



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What does a facilitator do?

At the most basic level, the facilitator's job has two parts: organizing/planning and facilitating.

Organizing/planning involves sorting out the details of the program in the way that works best for the parents and planning sessions that meet parents' needs.

You'll find information on the organizing and planning aspects of the facilitator's job in Sections 6, 7 and 8.

Facilitating is the combination of skill and experience facilitators use to help parents to feel welcome, to participate, to connect with one another and to build their knowledge, confidence and parenting skills.

This section of the Guide will give you some of the basic information you need to develop and build on your facilitation skills. Even the most experienced facilitators find that there is always more to learn. Be patient and keep at it. Don't expect to learn everything you'll need to know overnight. Children learn by doing. So do parents. So do facilitators.

All of the parents who participate in Nobody's Perfect will be adults. Some will be very young adults, but all will be coming to the program with knowledge and skills based on their own experiences.

An effective approach to working with adults can be built around seven basic activities, each of which requires the application of a range of skills. These basic activities are:

- Listening Actively
- Speaking Effectively
- Setting the Tone
- Involving Parents
- Exploring Values
- Being Flexible
- Facilitating Common Situations

Keep in mind that just as you are the facilitator within your group, parents are facilitators within their own families. The way that you deal with issues that arise in your group will be a model for parents to follow in their own lives.

Listening actively

When you listen actively, you listen for the whole message – the words and also the feelings behind the words. Then you reflect back the entire message – nothing less and nothing more. Active listening doesn't involve judging or giving advice. It simply reflects.

Active listening encourages parents to work out problems on their own, helping to build their confidence and self-esteem.

It is essential that parents both see and feel that you are listening actively to them. Parents will realize that their contributions are important if they see that you are paying attention. When they see that the facilitator listens respectfully and attentively, it encourages the participants to value one another's contributions.

To show that you are listening actively:

- **Look at the person who's talking to you.** If you're not looking, people think you're not listening.
- **Encourage the speaker to continue.** As well as making eye contact, you can show someone that you are paying attention by leaning forward and nodding encouragement or agreement as they speak.

Making encouraging and supportive sounds, like “Mmim,” or “Oh?” can let the speaker know you want him or her to continue talking. Let participants make their point. Don't interrupt unless it's absolutely necessary – for example, if the speaker is being disrespectful.

- **Acknowledge and reflect what the parent has said.** Remember to acknowledge the whole message – the feelings as well as the words. Don't just say, *“So your baby is keeping you up at night.”* Reflect the entire message: *“When your baby is crying in the night, you feel helpless because you don't know what to do. Then after a while you start to feel angry and frustrated because you know that tomorrow will be a bad day if you don't get some sleep.”*

- **Encourage the parent to work through the issue.** Don't judge, give an opinion or offer advice. Let the parent keep talking until she starts to come up with her own ideas for how to handle the issue.
- **Use participants' exact words.** Show that you heard what they said by repeating what they said. Don't paraphrase or put their ideas into your own words when writing on a flip chart.

Speaking effectively

For the most part, the facilitator's job is to listen, not to talk. Say as little as possible about your own ideas, opinions or experiences while facilitating. The more time you spend talking, the less time there will be for others to share their ideas.

As a facilitator, you need to be conscious of the language you use. Words and ideas that are comfortable and familiar to you may be new and strange for participants. This is especially true for technical terms like "developmental stages" or professional jargon like "ground rules" or "consensus building." You are not speaking effectively if your listeners do not understand what you're talking about.

Speak slowly and clearly, particularly if the language in which the group is being conducted is not the first language of the participants. Speaking slowly shows parents that it's okay to take time and think about what they're saying. And remember that your tone of voice carries your message as clearly as the words you use.

Facilitators also need to be conscious of their body language. How you stand, sit and move conveys a message. Avoid fidgeting, pacing or other mannerisms that send the message that you are nervous or that distract attention from what you're saying. Relax. Sit still and stand calmly. Let your body language show that you are comfortable with the group, glad to be with them and interested in what they have to say.

Silence is another part of speaking effectively. It can take time and experience for facilitators to become comfortable with silence in a group. A few seconds of quiet after you've asked a question or introduced a topic can seem to last forever. Bite your tongue, breathe, and wait. Give parents time to sort out their thoughts and decide what they want to say. If you jump in with your own ideas, you are showing the parents that their thoughts aren't worth waiting for.

When you do speak, look at each member of the group. This will help everyone to feel included. Be brief, give information, introduce new topics and encourage or focus discussion.

- **Ask questions that can't be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”**

What do you think might change this?

Then what did you do?

- **Ask for more information**

Can you tell us more about that?

What happened next?

Can you give us an example?

- **Ask for other points of view**

Are there more ways to look at this?

Is there anything we haven't thought about?

- **Make positive comments**

Good point. That's an interesting idea.

- **Acknowledge participants' contributions**

Connie said something a few minutes ago that really sheds some light on this...

- **Refer to points people have made before**

That sounds like what Chris said last week...

- **Make a point of using parents' comments in discussions**

Norma's comments about her problems finding a babysitter made me remember...

Shirley, you were telling me during the break about the way you handled that situation. Would you like to explain your ideas to the others?

- **Pass questions or ideas back to the whole group**

What do the rest of you think?

Would anyone like to respond to that?

- **Sum up the discussion and check that everyone understands**

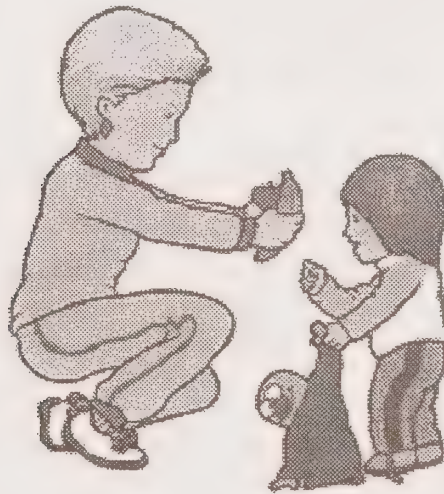
So, what we seem to be saying is . . .

We seem to agree that . . .

We seem to have several points of view on this . . .

- **Use people's names when speaking to them**

Remember: Facilitators do not have all the answers. In fact, even when you know the answer you can choose whether to answer the question yourself or not. If a question is one of general interest to the group, you can ask if anyone else has information or suggestions about getting more information. If the issue is beyond the scope of the Nobody's Perfect group, you – or other members of the group – can recommend other resources.



Setting the tone

It is the facilitator's job to set the direction and tone of the group. The facilitator's goal is to create an informal, relaxed, respectful tone where people feel comfortable and free to speak.

Remember, many participants coming to this group have had unpleasant and unrewarding group experiences. They will be alert to the ways in which this group is like others.

The basis for setting a warm and supportive tone is helping parents to feel welcome, involved and at ease. The idea is to put things on an informal basis, and to minimize the distance between you and the parents. To do this you can:

- Greet parents individually as they come in.
- Ask early arrivals to give you a hand in setting things up. It may be particularly helpful to invite fathers to get involved.
- Chat informally with participants as they arrive.
- Have something for people to do while they wait for the group to start (coffee, decorating a welcoming banner).
- Have a definite beginning to your session(s). Ask everyone to come and sit down.
- Create an activity before group introductions in which the participants interact in small groups and have fun. The goal is for participants to experience being relaxed and comfortable rather than being told that they will be.

Making agreements about how the group will work together is a way to begin to establish an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Ask what they need to agree on to make the group safe and comfortable for them. What agreements would allow them to ask questions and share their experiences, triumphs and concerns. For example, if they are to feel comfortable doing this, it is important for parents to know that what they say in the group will stay in the group. Agreeing, during the first session, about what can be repeated, when and to whom, can help create a feeling of safety from the start.

A relaxed and supportive tone can be carried into group discussions. For example, acknowledge your feelings in a way that connects with the parents' feelings or experiences and points out that you're all in this together, that you're here to support and learn from one another. *"I often feel excited and a bit nervous when I meet a new group of people. I'm feeling that way now. I wonder if you're feeling this too."*

And remember, laughter is a great tone-setter in learning situations. Humour should be equally funny for everyone. Be very careful that humour or jokes aren't made at anyone's expense.

*"When introducing yourself, look for what you have in common with the group and **briefly** share that. Give them the gift of knowing something personal about you since you want them to bring their personal experiences to the group."*

Facilitator

Setting the tone starts with your initial conversation with prospective participants and continues throughout each session.

Involving parents

Just being in a group can be a challenge for some parents. Nobody's Perfect is designed for parents who may be isolated. These parents are often unaccustomed to working in a group. For these parents, the group itself can be one of the most effective aspects of the Nobody's Perfect program.

Many participants come to Nobody's Perfect with a history of unhappy group experiences. Their experiences in school and other group situations may have left them feeling confused, left out, judged and somehow lacking. Nobody's Perfect gives parents the opportunity to participate in a group where their insights and experiences are valued and their contributions are respected. They are encouraged to discuss issues and problems and consider new possibilities. For some parents this is new and exciting, but it can also be a little frightening. Parents may need support as they learn how to act in a group and work out what they need to feel safe enough to participate.

Evaluations of the program have shown that most parents have made gains in self-esteem as a result of their participation in the group and the mutual support they found among other parents. Facilitators have also commented on how rewarding it was to watch parents respond to this "participant-centred" approach.

To involve parents, you can:

- **Give parents an active role in the program.**

Involve the parents in deciding what they want to get from the program and how they want to do it. A Nobody's Perfect program is based on the needs and interests that parents identify. For the program to have its greatest impact, parents need to be equal partners with the facilitator(s) in determining what they will discuss, when and how.

How issues get addressed is very important. Different people have different ways of learning. In a participant-centred approach, you'll need to use a variety of activities so that sessions will appeal to participants with different learning styles. When the parents have a part in deciding on how things will be done, it's much more likely that the activities you use will be appropriate, effective and fun.

- **Encourage parents to talk.**

Many adults learn best by talking with others. Discussions can make it easy for them to relate issues and ideas to their own personal experiences. It is very difficult to feel involved – or even to feel that anyone cares about your ideas – if you are just listening to a prepared lecture. It is equally difficult to feel that you are doing something that is helping you solve problems in your life when all you do is listen. Discussions allow for much more active learning.

Different people have different experiences. We learn from our own experiences, but we also learn from other people's – especially if we feel we have a lot in common with them. That's why sharing experiences and ideas is considered an essential aspect of a participant-centred approach. Your skills in active listening and effective speaking will go a long way toward encouraging parents to participate.

- **Help parents to participate actively.**

There is an old saying that goes: I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand. Nobody's Perfect creates opportunities for parents to build on what they already know. To do this, they need practical experience and the chance to apply new information, practise new skills and relate them to solving problems in their lives.

Using activities involves parents in working with real issues in their lives. Adults do best when they can make a connection between what they are learning and their own personal situations.

- **Encourage self-help and mutual support among parents.**

Groups work best when the members share responsibility for what happens in sessions. Many participants will have valuable skills and will be willing to use them in a group. For example:

- ◆ one parent may be good at summing up a discussion
- ◆ another parent may be skilled at moving the discussion to a new topic when the group is "stuck"
- ◆ one parent may know how to draw out shy people who don't usually take part

Nobody's Perfect evaluations show that what parents like most about the program is the opportunity to exchange information, ideas and experiences with other parents. They also like the chance to build support networks and connections among themselves. Group facilitators can encourage parents to support one another by providing opportunities where parents can exchange phone numbers, share transportation and participate in informal get-togethers. It is important to help each group build a support network during the program, so that they can keep in touch afterward and not feel "let down" and isolated when the program is over.

Exploring values

Think about how values will come up within your group

Because so much of parenting – and of life – is based on values, you'll be dealing with values frequently as a facilitator. There may be times when your own values will be similar to those of the parents in your group. There will be times when your values will be very different. Whatever the case, make sure that you think about the values you may need to address before each session.

As part of your planning, ask yourself:

- What issues are likely to come up around tonight's topic?
- What are my values regarding these issues?
- What's the big picture here? How can I see beyond my own values and not impose them on the group?
- What does my sponsoring organization recommend that I do in handling these issues as they arise?
- How and when will I deal with each of these issues in this program?
- How and when should I express my own values and opinions? How is this likely to affect the group?

To explore values around parenting, ask yourself, and the parents in your groups:

- As you were growing up, the way your parents treated you and the things they said to you gave you messages about what they believed and valued. As you were growing up, what messages did you receive from your parents?
 - ♦ What messages did you like? Which messages were positive?
 - ♦ What messages do you give to your children?

- ♦ What are the values hidden in the messages your parents gave you?
- ♦ What are the values hidden in the messages you give your children?
- ♦ What are some values you would like your children to have?
- ♦ What can you do to give your children messages that will encourage those values?

Other ways of identifying values include using video clips or real-life situations to trigger discussions. Another approach is to use an activity that requires parents to think about their values. (See Section 9 for a sample activity.)

For many parents, the concept of values is very abstract. It's important to explore values in ways that are concrete and connect with their lives. By talking about values, parents can make the link between what they believe and how their actions as parents reflect their values.

Recognize that values evolve over a lifetime and that change happens slowly. It's also important to remember that each of us can hold conflicting values. Becoming aware of these inner tensions can result in lively discussions and lead to helpful insights.

Using your own values and experiences in a group

Think carefully about when or whether it is appropriate to voice your own values in the group and about how this is likely to affect the group.

If a facilitator has a strong value and expresses it in a forceful manner – for example, “absolutely no slapping under any circumstances” – then those parents who disagree may feel intimidated or put down. As a result, they may not take part in the discussion and may lose the opportunity to examine, and perhaps reconsider, their own values.

As a facilitator, your role is to give parents the opportunity to explore their values. Introduce your values only when they will support parents or help them connect with their own values.

Using your own experiences

Because you are encouraging parents to learn from their own experiences, you may find that you want to share your experiences with the group. There are times when this is appropriate and times when it is not.

Talking too much about your own parenting experiences may lead participants to believe that what you did was “right.” This may cause them to think that their actions or experiences were “wrong” and, as a result, be unwilling to share them.

On the other hand, facilitators may talk about their parenting mistakes in an effort to put parents at ease. If facilitators focus on their own unresolved issues, it takes attention away from the participants and may reduce confidence in the facilitator's leadership.

Facilitators walk a fine line here. After all, you are asking parents to open up and share personal experiences with the group. It may seem only fair that you would be willing to do the same.

As a general rule, facilitators should use personal experiences sparingly. Keep in mind that your role as facilitator is to draw upon the experiences of the group members. Your experiences are useful only to the extent that they encourage parents to share their own.

One experienced facilitator expresses this very clearly:

"To me, the facilitator uses her own experience briefly to provide a means of connecting with the group, never to demonstrate what she did or to show the 'right' way."

Before you introduce your own experiences, you need to think about how this is likely to affect the group. Using your personal experiences to offer support to parents, or as a way of connecting with their experience, can help build trust and remove barriers between the facilitator and the group. However, leaning too heavily on the facilitator's experiences can shift the focus away from the participants.

When using their own experiences in the group, facilitators should:

- Be brief.
- Keep turning the focus back to the group. For example, ask the group to share first, then use your experience to reinforce what they have already contributed. If someone asks a question, redirect it to the group, *"That's a good question. What do the rest of you think?"*

Being flexible

Because Nobody's Perfect is designed to respond to the needs of the parents who participate, be flexible in your approach and your planning.

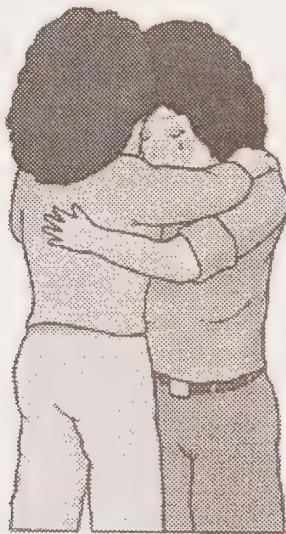
Be prepared to change your session plan to suit the needs and interests of parents. Getting off the topic area that you had planned can be a good sign. It may mean that parents have found something they really want to discuss and that your session is working well!

Pay attention to what is happening in your group. If parents are restless or look bored, there's a reason. When this happens, stop what you're doing and comment on what you are noticing. Perhaps they are not clear about what is being discussed or what they are to do. Perhaps the parents need a break or a change of pace. Perhaps they are not happy with the way things are going. Ask what they would like to do.

Do the same thing if the discussion is rambling and lacking direction. It may be that what you are talking about is not a priority for a particular parent or group of parents. Check with the parents to find out what is happening and decide with them what needs to be done.

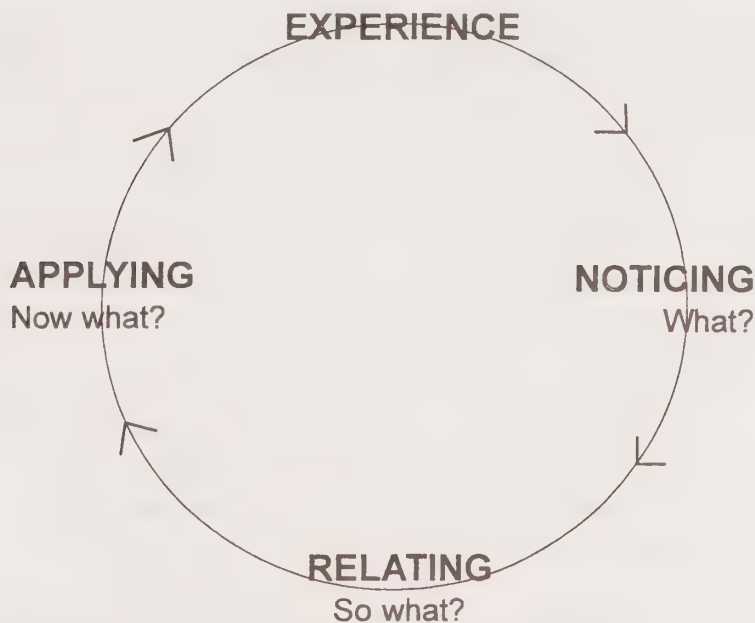
Facilitating some common situations

In all groups, situations arise that may seem awkward or uncomfortable – for example, someone cries, two people disagree, someone talks constantly or someone never says a word. By using the experiential learning cycle as a guide, these situations can provide opportunities for insight and understanding.



Using the experiential learning cycle in facilitating common situations

When a situation arises, acknowledge it without judging and look for common ground among participants. It is not your job to resolve the conflict or solve the problem. Your goal as a facilitator is to keep the group safe for everyone and have the group as a whole acknowledge what has happened and move on. You can do this by using the experiential learning cycle.



EXPERIENCE: The situation – whatever it may be – is the experience.
For example, *someone in the group cries during a discussion about the stresses of single parenting.*

NOTICE:

- Notice and acknowledge what's happening in the group, not what any one individual is doing. Bring what's happening in the group to the attention of the participants with no judgement and without singling anyone out.
"We're starting to reach some deep feelings in our discussion."
- Notice the underlying value or behaviour. What deeply felt belief is behind what's happening?
"Some of us cry when we're deeply touched."
- Encourage the group to find this value in themselves.
"How many of us have ever cried when something touched us deeply?"

(At this point, allow time for parents to reflect and respond by nodding or a show of hands.)

RELATE: Create an opportunity for each person in the group to find their own experience.

"When you cry, what's happening inside you?" (Pause)

"What do you do, or what would you like others to do, when you cry?"

(Again, allow time for parents to reflect and respond between questions.)

APPLY: • Pull together what the group has noticed and understood about the experience.

"Now we've had the experience of being deeply touched, and of tears. We've looked at how we respond when deeply touched and at the response we want when we cry."

• Provide an opportunity to apply this experience and understanding to what each of us will do in the future. (What will each of us do now in our lives?)

"What will you do the next time someone cries?"

"What will you do the next time you cry?"

• Decide how to proceed in this session. (What will we do now in this session?)

"Is there anything unfinished here? Should we continue with our topic – stresses of single parenting – or move on to our next activity?"

(Again, allow time for parents to reflect and respond between questions.)

This is an extremely flexible approach that can be used in many situations. The most important part of the cycle is the "notice" phase. If you find that your group is having difficulty in relating the experience to themselves or applying the issue, or if they seem to be stuck, return the discussion to the "notice" phase and look for key points you may have missed in your initial examination of the experience.

Here's another example of how this approach can be used in a common situation.

The group has been discussing how children are affected when their single parent is dating. An argument has arisen about the kind of role a boyfriend should have in a child's life.

EXPERIENCE: *Two parents disagree strongly and are arguing.*

- NOTICE:**
- Notice and acknowledge what's happening **in the group**, not what any one individual is doing. Bring what's happening in the group to the attention of the participants with no judgement and without singling anyone out.
"It looks like this is a topic that brings out some strong feelings and opinions."
 - Notice the underlying value or behaviour. What deeply felt belief is behind what's happening?
"We all long to have someone in our life who loves us and we want them to love our kids, too."
 - Encourage the group to find this value in themselves.
"How many of us want to feel really loved and want a partner who loves and cares for your kids the way you do?"

(Allow time for parents to reflect and respond by nodding or a show of hands.)

- RELATE:**
- Create an opportunity for each person in the group to find their own experience.
"When you think about your own life, what are the things that really matter to you about the way your partner treats your children?"

(Allow time for parents to reflect and respond.)

- APPLY:**
- Pull together what the group has noticed and understood about the experience.
"So we've noticed that what's really important for Barb and Henry is that their partner spend time with their kids and play with them. Rita thinks that it's important for her partner to help take care of the kids – to do things like feed and dress them. Josie wants her partner to make sure the kids do what she wants them to. So we all want our

partners to have a role and we all have our own ideas about what that role should be."

- Provide an opportunity to apply this experience and understanding to what each of us will do in the future. (What will each of us do now in our lives?)

"So based on what started out like an argument, we've found that we all want our partners to have a role. And even though we all have very strong and very different ideas about what that role should be, we want our partner to magically figure out what we expect. What ideas do you have now about what you can do about this?"

(Allow time for parents to reflect and respond.)

- Decide how to proceed in this session. (What will we do now in this session?)
"Is there anything unfinished here? Should we continue with this topic or move on to another activity?"

Some tips from experienced facilitators

- In a tense or uncomfortable situation, take a deep breath and let it go. Lower the pitch and volume of your voice – speak slowly and quietly. This will calm the atmosphere and give you time to think.
- At all costs – no matter what the provocation – refrain from judging or taking sides. Using the experiential learning cycle approach will help you do this.
- If the process gets stuck somewhere, go back to "notice."
- If you don't know what the underlying belief, behaviour or value is, ask the group. *"There's something here that's deeply felt and close to our hearts. What could that be?"*

Section 5

Practical approaches for working with parents



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Practical approaches for working with parents

The information on facilitation skills in Section 4 gives you the basic tools you'll use in working with Nobody's Perfect parents. As you gain experience as a facilitator, you'll develop new skills and polish the ones you already have. Over the years, Nobody's Perfect facilitators have found that their attitude and approach were the foundation on which they built their relationship with the parents in their groups. An open mind and an open heart are your most valuable tools.

In this section, we offer practical advice from experienced Nobody's Perfect Facilitators on how to work effectively with participants whose background and needs may be less familiar to you. We hope this information will assist you when you facilitate a group of parents who are from a different ethnic or cultural background or who's life experiences are different from your own.

This information is intended to help avoid early misunderstandings and enable your group to start in a direction that is respectful and supportive and that will enable facilitators and participants to enjoy each other and learn from one another.

This material is very basic. It covers the kinds of things that a facilitator working with parents from a background similar to his or her own would already know. For example, an Aboriginal facilitator will be quite familiar with the approaches that are most effective with a group of Aboriginal parents and will likely find little new information here.

Working with younger parents

Some things to keep in mind about younger parents

Because of their different stage of development and different life circumstances, the needs of younger parents may be quite different from those of parents in their twenties or thirties.

Developmental issues

- Teenage parents are learning to be parents and adults at the same time. Younger parents (17 years and under) may not be legally adults, but their responsibilities as parents place them in an adult role. This role conflict can make the adjustment to parenthood (and adulthood) even more stressful.
- This age group tends to “think for the moment.” The demands of parenting make planning even more of a problem. Younger parents' attendance at workshops and meetings can be irregular. Appointments are often neglected.
- Like other teens, younger parents tend to have unrealistic dreams or plans. For example, a young parent may imagine life away from parents to be exciting, without thinking about the real problems of child care, money or finding a job.

Life circumstances

- **Role conflicts** are common for parents in this age group. Young parents who live at home may feel conflict between their roles as parent and child. On the one hand, they are expected to make mature and responsible decisions about their child's care even though family members may not easily accept the decisions they make as parents. On the other hand, they are expected to follow rules about curfews and behaviour. For example, if a young parent wants to go out for the evening, he or she might have to arrange for babysitting and also deal with their own parents expecting them home at a certain time.

Young parents who do not live at home will likely face additional challenges related to housing quality, isolation and lack of support. They may also have greater difficulties in managing their time and making adequate child care arrangements.

Young parents also face conflicts between their roles as parents and as adolescents. Accepting responsibility for their children and making their children their primary concern can be very difficult for very young parents who have a developmental need to be with their own age group.

- **Emotional issues** can result from the difficult life experiences many teen mothers have faced. In any group of young mothers, you can expect that some (or even most) of the participants will have faced many challenges, including:
 - ♦ Physical, verbal, sexual and/or emotional abuse from parents or boyfriends
 - ♦ Rejection by family, friends and/or their baby's father

Responses to these experiences can include:

- ♦ Aggression
- ♦ Anger
- ♦ Disruptive behaviour
- ♦ Guilt
- ♦ Depression
- ♦ Self-destructive behaviour
- ♦ Substance abuse

Being young, single and a parent is a difficult situation, both emotionally and physically, and it is important to recognize and acknowledge this. Let these young parents know that you respect their efforts to raise healthy, happy children. One way to do this is to refer to them as “young women” and “young men.” They may seem very young, but it’s important to acknowledge their adult responsibilities and avoid calling them “girls” or “boys.” It’s also important to avoid stereotyping these young parents – remember that each one is an individual and is facing a unique set of challenges.

Ideas for working with younger parents

Recruitment

It can sometimes be difficult to attract young parents to your sessions. As a rule, teens aren't much interested in events which involve health, learning and group discussion unless the event is tailored to suit their age group. And even if they do agree to participate, they may frequently miss sessions.

You may find that you need to focus on different aspects of the program when attempting to make it seem attractive to teens – for example, emphasizing the fun and social aspects of the group, rather than what they could learn. It is very important to provide food, transportation and child care and to use these as recruitment tools.

Facilitators have found that it can be effective to promote your program through existing services and programs for teen parents.

If possible, a group made up entirely of young parents is ideal – a 16-year-old parent may feel isolated in a group where the other parents are all much older.

Tips on recruiting younger parents

Whether you plan to work only with adolescent parents or encourage them to participate with other age groups, experienced facilitators suggest:

- Approach teen parents personally. Many of them will not attend on their own initiative. This one-on-one time can be used to discuss their concerns and interests and to establish trust. Knowing that there will be at least one familiar face can be a comfort to adolescents when they are joining a new group.
- Avoid forms and structured interviews during your first meeting.
- You may want to involve teenagers in the recruitment process. It is important to make sure that teen parents are aware that there will be other young parents in the group.
- If attendance at Nobody's Perfect sessions is irregular, try contacting parents who have missed sessions to see if there are any problems. It may have nothing to do with the quality of your program. It is a good idea to remind participants before meetings of when and where they will be getting together.

"Getting away from the house and talking to friends that have gone through similar things is really important to me."

Teen Parent

Focus on their roles first

As with most people, young parents respond best when they care about the topics being addressed. Because most young parents are facing developmental issues and role conflicts, facilitators have found that it's most effective to deal with these at the beginning of the program (and to expect to deal with them on a continuing basis through the sessions). Before discussing the specifics of child care and parenting, younger parents may need to focus on their role as a parent and their relationships with others. Topics could include:

- Living with parents and changing from a child to a parent
- Dealing with unwanted criticism and advice
- Reducing personal stress
- Relationships with boyfriends and peers

Encourage mutual support

Feeling part of a group is very important to most teens. They are more likely to take part in discussions if they are comfortable with the group. All of the points on Involving Parents in Section 4 apply to young parents. In addition, make a particular effort to:

- Plan lots of informal activities that will give your group the chance to do things together – for example, preparing a special meal or snack; organizing a cookie exchange at Christmas; planning a toy or children's clothing exchange; or building toys.
- Encourage participants to answer one another's questions and to respond to one another's comments.
- Make connections between participants by pointing out similarities and differences in their experiences and feelings.

Program and session planning

You need to consider the realities of working with a group of adolescents when planning your program and sessions.

- **Think about attention span**

Most younger parents will have shorter attention spans than older parents. Have frequent breaks and use a slower pace when dealing with new information.

- **Expect to repeat key ideas and information.**

Younger parents may need repeated opportunities to discuss issues important to them. For example, if stress is an issue for members in your group, you can introduce the topic on its own and then reintroduce it in sessions on child discipline and planning for the future.

- **Use specific questions and examples.**

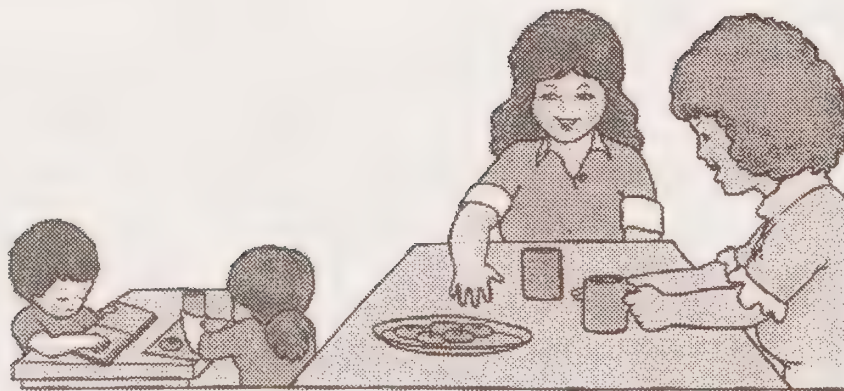
Keep discussion questions down to earth and specific. Avoid questions like “*How do you feel?*” as this can be difficult to respond to, especially for those who are not used to expressing their feelings in a group. This question could be replaced by something more specific such as “*What did you do?*” or “*What happened when _____?*” or “*What was that like for you?*”

- **Be flexible.**

If you are working specifically with this age group, your program will need to be even more flexible than with an older group of parents. It is still important to make your session plans, but it is equally important to be prepared to change them if the group seems interested in discussing a different issue. Recognize that you'll need to adjust your style to suit the group. Don't expect instant enthusiasm. Keep at it until you discover what works with each group.

Some tips from experienced facilitators

- **Don't judge or take sides.** It's important to remain non-judgemental and impartial. Avoid labelling feelings or ideas as "right" or "wrong."
- **Keep your sense of humour.** Humour can keep things interesting. Be prepared to laugh at yourself.
- **Use hands-on activities** to keep participants actively involved and help them learn to work together.
- **Choose activities that reflect teen culture.** The activities and music you choose should be tailored to the interests of this age group. Use music they enjoy and activities that allow them to explore their creativity or tap into their experiences. Sports, make-overs and group activities have all been popular in teen groups.
- **Listen more than you talk.** This is important in general, but especially so with young parents.
- **Use lots of positive reinforcement.** Focus on their courage in trying new ideas. Help the group to change negative attitudes to positive by emphasizing their strengths.



Working with fathers

Some things to keep in mind about fathers

Becoming a father is a profound event in men's lives. As with all turning points in life, it can be stressful and difficult as well as exciting and joyful. Becoming a father can be stressful for all men, but especially so for very young men, or when the pregnancy was unplanned, or for men who haven't had a positive role model in their own fathers.

Fathering is different from mothering. Being a father involves more than changing half the diapers. Fathers interact with their children in ways that are different and valuable. They bring a special energy and insight to their children. Fathers need support and encouragement as they grow into their unique role in their children's lives.

What society expects of fathers is changing. Today, men are being asked to be a different kind of father than their own father may have been – that is, to be more involved in their children's day-to-day care and to show their love and support in ways that are different from what their own father did. The differences can be especially pronounced in fathers from cultural groups with views on parental roles that are different from the Canadian norm.

Adolescent fathers face some of the same developmental issues and role conflicts that young mothers face. (See "Working with Younger Parents," page 50)



Ideas for working with fathers

Recruitment

It can be difficult to involve fathers in parenting programs. Reaching fathers who have low incomes or low education levels, who are isolated or very young, can be especially difficult.

Recruit fathers through prenatal programs, legal advocacy programs or sites where a comprehensive array of services are offered – for example, a community centre or community health centre. Facilitators have also successfully reached fathers through personal counselling services; educational programs; employment programs; recreation centres; correctional and youth detention centres; child care centres; and local hang-outs. Services for young mothers can also provide an avenue for reaching young fathers.

Agencies and programs can support one another in reaching and working with fathers. Recruitment can be a good opportunity to establish or strengthen these support networks.

Use a male facilitator

A male facilitator can be an important factor in reaching fathers, especially when the group is entirely male. Having a male facilitator involved in recruitment can help attract fathers and give them someone to identify with.

Because facilitators model problem-solving and personal relations skills, a male facilitator is also an important role model for the fathers in the group.

Hold your sessions in a “father-friendly” place

Choose a location where the fathers will feel comfortable and welcome – for example, a women’s clinic is probably not a good choice. Encourage whatever site you use to become even more welcoming to fathers. Organizing a special event for Father’s Day, posting photos from father-child events in the facility, hanging pictures and posters showing fathers and children will all let fathers know that they are welcome and valued.

Some tips from experienced male facilitators

- **Make sports or physical activity part of the program.** Facilitators say that men often find it easier to talk and relate to one another when they are doing things together. This is especially effective with young fathers. They may come for the basketball game and stay for the parenting group.
- **Bring food.** Again, this may be a more effective lure – especially for the first few sessions – than the prospect of the program itself. Check with the fathers to see what they'd like. Bring lots of food, especially for young fathers.
- **Encourage the Dads to talk.** They need to tell their stories about their own fathers and work out their experiences growing up. They need to think about what was positive in their own father's approach and what they want to do differently.
- **Fathers respond well to problem-solving situations** and enjoy analyzing a situation and seeking a solution.
- **Consider the environment and context in which the father will parent.** Some fathers will be in stable relationships. Many will not. Some will have difficult relationships with their child's mother. Some may come from communities where the father's involvement in his child's life is considered optional. Recognize that each father is an individual facing specific challenges with varying amounts and kinds of support.
- **Remember: men are different from women.** When facilitating a group which includes both fathers and mothers, keep in mind that fathers approach the job of parenting differently. Vary your sessions so that they include activities and information that men will enjoy.

Working with parents who have low literacy skills

Some things to keep in mind about parents who have low literacy skills

Low literacy is defined as having difficulty in using and understanding the kinds of printed material encountered in day-to-day life. Thirty-eight percent, nearly four out of every 10 adult Canadians, have difficulty with reading and do not make use of printed materials. It can be difficult to identify a person with low literacy skills. People often go to great lengths to disguise their lack of literacy and are very good at concealing it.

Because Nobody's Perfect is designed for adults with low educational levels, you should assume that every group you facilitate will include some parents with low literacy skills.

Having low literacy skills affects the kinds of information that people have access to and how they are best able to learn. Having low literacy skills does not mean that a person is not intelligent. People with low literacy skills learn differently, but they do learn. You will need to consider their learning style and develop ways of capitalizing on their strengths. When working with parents who have low literacy skills, never overestimate their background knowledge and never underestimate their intelligence and life experience.

Ideas for working with parents who have low literacy skills

Show the parents that you respect them.

Showing these parents that you respect them and respect their efforts to be good parents is very important. This is true for all parents, but especially so for those with low literacy skills whose self-image and self-esteem may be very low. It is especially important with this group of parents that the facilitator not seem to be the "expert." These parents have a lot to offer, but they sometimes need encouragement to recognize the value of their own insights and experiences. The facilitators need to show that they value the participants' contributions before the participants will value them.

Be flexible.

It may take adults with low literacy skills longer to do some activities and you should allow lots of time when you plan your sessions. Also, recognize that there may be varying levels of literacy within your group and select exercises and activities that allow all participants to feel included and involved. Working in pairs and small groups can be effective. Allow lots of time for discussions.

Use the Nobody's Perfect parent books.

In Section 9, "Using Nobody's Perfect Materials" describes how the parent books have been designed to be usable by parents who have various levels of comfort with printed materials. Many parents with low literacy skills will be able to use these books. However, you need to budget time in your sessions for parents to get to know what's in the books and to learn how to find what they need. Refer to the books often. Use them to introduce new topics. Make sure that parents have a reason to open them and find something in every session. Adults with low literacy skills have very few reasons to like books. They are not likely to use the books at home without support and preparation in the sessions.

Focus on DOING things in your sessions.

Focus on learning activities that give parents the chance to DO things – to play a part or to practise a skill. Take into account the different ways low-literacy adults learn by using many different approaches – activities that help participants learn by watching, by listening, by doing. Use a lot of visual aids and hands-on activities.

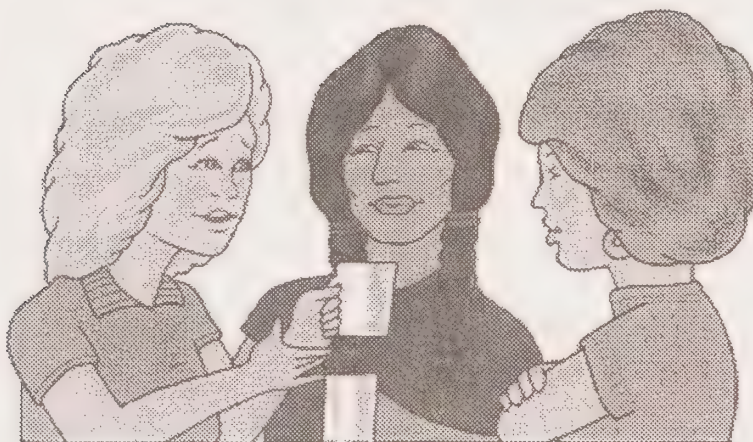
Help parents make connections between ideas and actions.

Adults with low literacy skills are most comfortable dealing with concrete information and examples. They have difficulty in turning an abstract idea into a concrete action. They also have difficulty in transferring information from one learning experience to another. For example, they may learn the problem-solving approach to dealing with children's behaviour, but won't make the leap to using it in other parts of their lives. You will need to give them the opportunity to practise applying the approach in several different situations.

It's also important to help participants make the connection between the parenting approaches they are trying out in the group and how they will use them in the real world in which they live. After activities and practice sessions, allow time for discussions about how they can use this approach in their own home, with their own children.

Some tips from experienced facilitators

- **Encourage practice at home.** Based on what happened during the session, encourage parents to choose something that they would like to notice, do or think about between sessions. Avoid asking parents to do things that involve reading and writing.
- **Stick to the basics.** Always focus on the basic steps needed to accomplish a task. Use very basic, plain language. Emphasize your points with concrete examples. Encourage parents to contribute concrete examples from their own experience.
- **Help participants feel safe.** Self-esteem is a very sensitive issue with low- literacy adults and many feel an overwhelming sense of inadequacy. The facilitator needs to take every opportunity to build their confidence. Choose activities that have very little risk of failure. Double-check all your activities to be sure they don't require literacy skills. Look for ways to stimulate conversation and share ideas that don't depend on reading and writing skills.



Working with parents from diverse cultures

Some things to keep in mind about working with parents from diverse cultures

Each culture is different.

Many of the values and beliefs we hold most dear – the things we consider “natural” and “normal” – are based on our culture. However, these values and beliefs differ significantly from culture to culture. Canada, particularly in the large urban centres, is a culturally diverse society. To work effectively in a cross-cultural setting, it’s important that you not only understand that values differ, but also that you respect and accept values that are different from your own. However, it is also important to look for and find the common ground that is shared by all parents in the group. You may find the information on values in Sections 2 and 4 to be helpful.

Spend some time learning about the cultures of the people you will be working with. If you have some understanding of their values and beliefs about family life, their parenting practices, and the value they place on their relationships with their children, you’ll be less likely to judge or misinterpret their actions.

Parenting is a culturally sensitive issue.

The role of the parent and the family is the same in every culture – to pass on to the children the values, beliefs and behaviour of the culture. Parents from different cultural backgrounds have their own approaches to parenting and may have different goals as parents. For example, some cultures value obedience and respect for elders in children. Others believe small children should be cherished and indulged.

Many parents immigrating to Canada have had happy family relationships in their home country and are excellent parents who love their children and want the best for them. It can be a shock for them to realize that some of the time-honoured parenting approaches and practices that they learned in their home country are very different from what is done in Canada. Imagine moving to another country and being asked to change the way you raise your children and the way you approach many aspects of your daily life. Immigrant parents may also find it difficult to parent when the family supports and resources that were an important part of parenting in their homeland may no longer be available.

The role of Nobody’s Perfect is not to teach participants a particular “Canadian way” to parent. Part of your role as a facilitator is to help parents build on their existing skills so that they can be effective parents in this new country.

Expect to address racism.

It is essential that facilitators working with immigrant parents have a thorough understanding of racism and its effects. Be very clear and honest in examining and understanding your own beliefs and feelings regarding race and culture. Anti-racist principles and practices should be part of the way you facilitate every session. Parents may face racism in their daily lives and bring it to the group for discussion. They may be looking for ways to help their children handle racism.

Ignoring racist behaviour sends a message that it is okay. This is a complex issue and must be addressed. Look for resources to help you address racism from local multicultural associations and human rights organizations.

Ideas for working with parents from diverse cultures

Some tips from experienced facilitators for working with immigrant parents

- **Acknowledge participants' traditional parenting skills and values.** Help them to identify some of the values and beliefs that influence their behaviour and the way they parent. Encourage them to share the cultural patterns that are part of their daily life. Affirm the feelings that parents have in common.
- **Expect, accept and respect cultural differences in the kinds of behaviour that are considered to be appropriate.** The beliefs about what is polite and what is rude differ across cultures. If you are not sure what behaviour is appropriate, ask. For example, you may see cultural differences in:
 - ◆ whether people look you in the eye when they speak to you
 - ◆ how close together they are comfortable standing when speaking
 - ◆ the kinds and amount of touching that are acceptable – for example, shaking hands, kissing, hugging, patting children on the head
 - ◆ how emotion is expressed
 - ◆ when thanks are considered necessary
- **Respect parents' privacy.** Be careful about intruding into a parent's privacy. There is a great deal of cultural variation among the kinds of topics that are considered to be private. Go slowly when introducing topics you're not sure about. Ask open-ended questions and allow the parents to determine how much they are comfortable in sharing.

- **Listen carefully and avoid making assumptions about what the parents mean.** Check to be sure you understand.

Also, make sure that the parents aren't making incorrect assumptions about what **you** mean. Just as you are interpreting their actions through your cultural beliefs, they are interpreting your actions from their cultural viewpoint. Just because parents nod (or even say "yes") when you speak, it doesn't always mean that they agree or understand. In some cultures, this is just a polite way of letting you know that they are listening.

- **Plan for long discussion periods in your session.** In some cultures, it's considered impolite to be too direct and a certain amount of general chat is required before the point of the discussion can be brought up. It can take a while for the speaker to get around to what she or he really wants to say. For the same reason, parents may answer questions indirectly, by giving you less important details before moving to the relevant response.
- **Be as calm and relaxed as possible.** Be warm, flexible and open to new ideas. Make an effort to put participants at ease and reduce their tension. Many cultures are comfortable with silence, so a quiet group is not necessarily a sign of poor communication or discomfort with the program.

However, if you sense discomfort or unease, follow up on it. In some cultures, it is considered very rude to express disagreement. It may take some very tactful efforts to draw out some parents' thoughts and ideas if they fear that they may be contrary to yours.

Some tips from experienced facilitators for working with newcomer parents (immigrants and refugees recently come to Canada)

- **Use translators and cultural interpreters whenever possible.** Newcomer parents are more comfortable speaking in their own language when discussing emotional issues like their own childhood, their families or their parenting experiences. Speaking from the heart often requires the mother tongue.
- **Understand and acknowledge the enormous stress these families are experiencing.** Everything is new. They need to re-learn everything they took for granted as "normal." For example, many everyday things – finding a place to live; finding work; arranging for child care; shopping; banking; public transportation; accessing health care; settling children into school – are completely different. And it's all happening in a new language, and for many a new (and colder) climate.

- Other stresses newcomer families face can include:

- ♦ loss of the support of an extended family
- ♦ lack of knowledge about what's expected and acceptable in Canada
- ♦ difficulty in having their educational qualifications and work experience recognized
- ♦ facing racism and/or being a minority
- ♦ changes in the roles of the parents – for example, the mother may find paid employment before the father does
- ♦ changes in parent/child relationships as the children adapt to the new country and are exposed to non-traditional values and influences

These kinds of stresses can result in isolation, confusion, frustration and loss of self-esteem.

- **Refugees can face even greater difficulties in adjusting to Canada than immigrants who are here voluntarily.** Refugees have been forced – by political or economic necessity – to leave their homeland. They may have faced great risk and extreme hardship before coming to Canada. They may have lived in refugee camps or have suffered violence or traumatic losses of family members. These parents may suffer post-traumatic stress as a result of these experiences.

Some tips from experienced facilitators for working with parents who speak little english

- **Help parents to concentrate.** Reduce distractions and background noises. Avoid interruptions. Learning to communicate in a new language requires enormous effort and concentration. Give the speaker your full attention and help him focus on the topic being addressed.
- **Don't rush the speaker.** Pay attention. Offer help only if necessary. Allow the speaker to go at her own pace.
- **Speak slowly and clearly.** Choose your words carefully. Don't talk too much. Use clear, basic, plain language. Focus on one idea at a time. Don't use idiomatic expressions or slang – you need to be **very** familiar with a language to be able to understand these.

- **Repeat what you've said when someone doesn't understand.** Repeat what you said before as closely as possible. Change only one or two words. Speak clearly and a bit more slowly. **Don't** speak more loudly. The listener heard you the first time – she just didn't understand you.
- **Make sure your listeners understand what you're saying.** Don't assume that because participants nod or say "yes," they understand. Double check by asking listeners to repeat the message in their own words.

Working with Aboriginal parents

Some things to keep in mind about Aboriginal parents

Respect for Aboriginal beliefs and traditions and a willingness to incorporate them into your program are essential for working effectively with Aboriginal parents. There is an increasing interest among Aboriginal people in affirming and exploring traditional beliefs, values and parenting approaches.

The term "Aboriginal" includes First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. It's important to remember that parenting styles, cultural values and traditions differ among Aboriginal peoples. (See "Working with Parents from Diverse Cultures" earlier in this section. You may find the general information about working with parents from cultures different from your own to be helpful when working with Aboriginal parents.)

If you are new to working with Aboriginal parents, you will find it helpful to meet with an Elder or an acknowledged representative of the local Aboriginal community before you begin your Nobody's Perfect program. A local Aboriginal Friendship Centre or Aboriginal Head Start Program can be a good source of contacts and resources.



Ideas for working with Aboriginal parents

Recognize the role of spirituality in parents' lives.

Many Aboriginal parents believe that spirituality has a very important place in parenting, and this dimension should be considered for inclusion in the program. One way to acknowledge this is to ask whether or how parents would like to incorporate their spiritual beliefs into the group.

Recognize the importance of family and community.

Community and family are very important to Aboriginal parents. Extended families and a sense of community are very strong factors in Aboriginal parents' lives. In some cases, grandparents or other relatives may have a significant role in raising their grandchildren. Asking the group if they would like to invite Elders to participate in several sessions can be a positive way to acknowledge this. Focusing on building and strengthening connections among parents can also support this cultural value.

Recognize the cultural importance of the circle.

The concept that all participants are equal and that shared dialogue is important are key concepts in many Aboriginal cultures. In many communities, arranging chairs in a circle for activities is a good idea.

The circle can also be a helpful image for connecting ideas. For example, the Experiential Learning Cycle uses a circle as a visual image of the way the components connect and build on one another. Honouring the cultural values inherent in the circle requires that the facilitator make a conscious effort to approach issues holistically, **not** take over and **not** be the expert.

Some tips from experienced facilitators

- **Don't be afraid of silence.** Aboriginal parents may be quiet or shy and may need time to build trust before they feel comfortable sharing in a group. As well, many Aboriginal people feel that it is rude to answer a question too quickly. They feel that they should give the questioner the courtesy of thinking before they respond. Recognize this and give participants time to consider their answer. Do not jump in to fill the silence. Remember too that some people take in a great deal while saying very little.

- **Invite parents to help guide the group process.** Some groups may wish to incorporate traditional approaches into group process. For example, many Aboriginal communities have a strong tradition of the sharing circle. In a sharing circle, people take turns speaking while holding a symbolic object – an eagle feather, talking stick, grandfather rock or other object. Respect is shown for the person who is speaking. No one speaks unless they are holding the object. No one interrupts the speaker.
- **Be conscious of literacy levels.** Recognize that English may not be the Participant's first language.
- **Offer food, child care and transportation.** It may be difficult for parents of all cultures to participate without these supports. Having meals and snacks together can also build a sense of community.



Section 6

Organizing Nobody's Perfect programs



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Organizing Nobody's Perfect programs

Before you can actually facilitate a group of parents, you need to organize the program.

There are two aspects to organizing a Nobody's Perfect program:

- Recruiting parents to participate
- Making arrangements for the sessions

Recruiting participants

Finding potential participants, getting them interested in the program and encouraging them to attend can require a great deal of time and effort. However, experienced facilitators have found that effort put into recruitment pays off later in terms of parents' interest in and attendance at the Nobody's Perfect sessions.

Recruiting parents for Nobody's Perfect can be challenging because your role in recruitment is to encourage the participation of a particular group of parents, not to advertise a public program. This means that some of the standard approaches to publicizing programs won't work well. For example, public service announcements and press releases reach **all** parents and may put you in the awkward position of having to turn interested parents away because they are not part of the group of parents for whom the program is intended.

In addition, many of the parents for whom Nobody's Perfect has been developed are isolated, either because they have no friends or family nearby or because they live in an isolated area. It can take considerable effort to find and interest these parents. Many facilitators have found that an effective first step in recruitment is to educate key people whom your potential participants like and trust. They can be valuable go-betweens to introduce both you and Nobody's Perfect to the parents they know or work with.

Facilitators have tried many different recruitment methods, including:

- contacting parents by phone
- working with a group that is already formed (for example, a play group or mother's group)
- Using a go-between to make the initial contact with parents and introduce you to them

Over the years, facilitators have found that a face-to-face visit, ideally in the parent's home, is the most effective recruitment method. A home visit – or a first visit held in a place the parent has chosen – can give the parent a feeling of greater comfort and control. As one facilitator notes:

"The home visit by the facilitator initiates a relationship of trust."

In addition, Nobody's Perfect evaluations show that recruiting parents face-to-face is the best predictor of whether a parent would show up for the first session and continue to participate.

The process of recruitment has several steps:

- Discuss program details with your sponsoring organization
- Get the names of possible participants
- Contact and visit parents

Discuss program details with your sponsoring organization

When you are beginning the recruitment process, it is important to be clear about what your sponsoring organization expects will happen.

Your sponsoring organization will have information about:

- **The kinds of parents it wants to participate**

Nobody's Perfect has been designed for specific groups of parents. However, your sponsoring organization may be interested in reaching particular parts of this general Nobody's Perfect population. For example, it may be interested in focusing on single mothers rather than couples, or women 18 years or under, or young fathers, or parents with low literacy skills.

- **Effective approaches to recruiting parents**

Your sponsoring organization may also have useful information about how to contact the group of parents that you will be recruiting. It may have a network of contacts within the community who can suggest participants or it may be planning to recruit parents from other programs it sponsors.

- **The community in which you will be working**

Your sponsoring organization may be able to offer ideas for finding a suitable location and other suggestions that can smooth out the first stages of program planning.

- **The size of your group**

Most groups have between 6 and 12 parents. Groups of this size are big enough to encourage discussion but are still small enough so that parents have enough time to talk. You will probably have to contact more parents than you hope will participate in order to allow for refusals and drop-outs.

Sponsoring organizations may have a preferred size for their groups. However, unless the size has already been determined, you will decide on the size of your group.

- **The number of sessions**

Some sponsoring organizations are funded to provide a specific number of sessions, for example, six. Others are able to be more flexible in response to parents' needs and can support an 8- or-10 week series. Some may have tried another format entirely, for example day-long sessions over a weekend.

- **The amount and kind of support that is available to assist participants with child care and transportation expenses**

This can be an important issue for Nobody's Perfect parents. It's very helpful to know exactly what kind of support you can offer before you begin recruiting.

- **The amount and kind of follow-up support available for parents who want to meet after the program is over**

Some sponsoring organizations are able to offer a place for parents to continue to meet or other support to help parents keep in touch.

Get the names of potential participants

Many of the parents who participate in Nobody's Perfect programs are people the facilitators already know or know of. In the program evaluation, facilitators said that the most effective way of recruiting parents was through the use of personal contacts.

In some cases, all of the participants come from the sponsoring organization, but unless you already have a list of parents, you will need to obtain the names of parents to contact. Some sponsoring organizations have a network or partnership of agencies which provides them with names of potential participants.

"I am able to contact a partnership of various community organizations: hospital, schools, mental health, family resource centres. This is very cost-effective and fun!"

Facilitator

Other potential contacts include:

- ♦ a parent who has already been recruited may be able to suggest a friend who might be interested
- ♦ friends
- ♦ health professionals (doctors, public health nurses, etc.)
- ♦ a single parent centre
- ♦ a transition house
- ♦ teachers
- ♦ a church group
- ♦ a social services agency or department
- ♦ family resource centres
- ♦ community centres
- ♦ child care centres

When other agencies or professionals in the community want you to include parents in your group, you can ask them to speak to the parents and find out if it is okay for you to contact them about participating in the program.

Be prepared to describe the program and to provide posters and copies of the promotional brochure to agencies or professionals that may not have heard much about Nobody's Perfect.

Contact and visit parents

Most facilitators find that a face-to-face conversation is an essential part of recruitment. A telephone conversation alone is too impersonal and is not the best way to explain the program to a parent.

Initial contact is usually made by telephone, then a convenient time is set for the facilitator to meet in the parent's own home or at a place of the parent's choosing.

A home visit can help recruit parents by providing:

- **An initial contact in a relaxed environment.** It is just as important for the parent to see you and get to know a little about you, as it is for you to meet the parent.
- **A chance to extend a personal invitation to participate.** A home visit allows for a much more relaxed and friendly discussion. If it's appropriate, you can use printed material to describe what a Nobody's Perfect program is like. Some parents will not have been part of a group before and may be uncomfortable discussing parenting with you or with others in their community. A home visit can help ease their minds.
- **A way to describe the program** by showing the Nobody's Perfect books and materials.
- **A way to determine the parents' interests by referring to the program materials and discussing them informally.** The more information you obtain about parents' interests or concerns during recruitment, the easier it will be for you to start planning sessions.

"It was the initial visit which brought me to the program. The facilitator seemed so down to earth. She told me that she was a single mother and we talked about some problems we both shared."

Parent

Because this first contact creates such a strong impression, it is important for facilitators to think carefully about how they approach this meeting.

Experienced facilitators have found that to make home visits most productive, you should:

- ♦ be on time
- ♦ dress neatly but casually
- ♦ be friendly and open
- ♦ not come across as an authority on parenting

Facilitators should be prepared to face real poverty in some homes. It is essential that you keep an open and accepting attitude throughout your visit. If parents feel that you are shocked, put off, or judgemental about their homes, they may not wish to participate in the program.

In some cases, personal safety may be an issue for a facilitator making a home visit. If you are concerned, arrange to meet in another place of the parent's choosing or have another facilitator accompany you to the parent's home.

Recruitment pointers

Facilitators need to be aware that from the time they begin recruiting, they are setting the tone for their sessions and involving parents in planning. The same warm, friendly, non-judgemental approach that helps parents feel welcome when they arrive at the sessions will help arouse their interest in participating in the first place.

When recruiting parents:

- Be positive and enthusiastic about the program. Explain why you think it is worthwhile.
- Emphasize that you are not asking the parent to take part in the program because you think there is something wrong. In fact, the program is not meant for parents who have serious problems. You are simply offering a very practical and worthwhile program that you think they'd enjoy.
- Respond to the parent's fears or hesitations.
 - ♦ If the parent seems worried about going alone, ask if he or she has a friend who might like to be part of a group.
 - ♦ If you are dealing with a couple, invite both partners to participate.

- ♦ Talk about the advantages of being part of a group and sharing experiences and ideas with other parents. Make it clear that nobody has to speak unless they want to and that the group members will make their own agreements about how they will work together.
- ♦ If a parent feels uncertain about attending group sessions, ask if it's okay for another parent who is excited about Nobody's Perfect, or who has already completed the program, to phone.
- Offer information about what the program covers.
 - ♦ Give specific examples of topics covered in the books. Show the parent the books and materials that he or she will receive.
- Give details about the arrangements
 - ♦ Tell the parent the time, place, dates and number of sessions if these have been confirmed. If not, ask the parent for her or his preferences.
 - ♦ Talk about child care, transportation, and any other obstacles that might prevent the parent from attending.
- Avoid asking parents to fill out forms during your first meeting.
- Leave your name and contact number. If it's appropriate for the particular parent (that is, if the material is in the parent's language and at his or her literacy level), leave printed information about the program. However, save the Nobody's Perfect books and materials to give to parents during your sessions.

Find out what parents want to learn

Nobody's Perfect programs are based on what the parents want. One of your goals, from your first contact on, is to find out what parents are interested in and concerned about.

To begin to identify parents' interests:

- Introduce the Nobody's Perfect materials in the course of conversation and notice if any subjects seem to be of particular interest to the parent.
- When inquiring about the number, age and sex of the children in the family, ask if there are any topics related to the children's health, safety or behaviour the parent would like to know more about.

The first meeting with a parent should be a process of give and take. During your conversation, you'll be getting to know each other and beginning to get a feel for the issues that interest the parent. The idea that what happens during the program will depend on what the parents want to know will be a new idea for many parents.

You probably won't determine all the parent's interests during recruitment. Some parents may not feel comfortable talking to you until they've had a chance to get to know you. Other parents may need the stimulation of group discussions to spark their interest in a particular topic. New issues will certainly come up during the program.

You'll find more information about identifying parents' interests at the first session and throughout the program in Section 7, "Planning a Nobody's Perfect Program."

How to say "no" to ineligible participants

Facilitators occasionally find themselves having to say "no" to parents who have heard about the program and want to participate but who don't fit the profile of parents for whom Nobody's Perfect has been designed.

If you need to say "no" to a parent, here is one approach you could take:

"It's wonderful that you're interested in participating in a parenting program, but Nobody's Perfect is funded for parents who have fewer resources to make parenting easier. Unfortunately, you don't fit this profile, but you could speak with _____ about another parenting program that you might find really interesting."

How to handle negative reactions from parents

Some parents will react very favourably to your description of Nobody's Perfect and will be eager to participate. Others, however, will express negative reactions. Ask yourself, "Does this come from what I said or from one of their previous experiences?"

"Once when I invited a parent to participate, she said 'Why ask me? I'm not a bad parent.' I knew right then I was sending the wrong message. These invitations need to be delivered sensitively."

Facilitator

Here are some reactions and feelings facilitators have encountered:

- A parent feels suspicious, singled out or threatened.
- A parent is afraid she will be regarded by others as a “bad” parent if she participates in Nobody's Perfect.
- A parent feels she is coping very well and is not interested.
- A parent is not interested because Nobody's Perfect does not provide money or job opportunities.

When you are inviting parents to participate in Nobody's Perfect, emphasizing the following points will help you deal with some of these negative reactions.

- Nobody's Perfect is for parents who do not have serious problems.
- Nobody's Perfect contains a lot of practical information. The purpose of the program is to give parents an opportunity to share their experiences, solve their own problems and help each other.
- Participating in the program offers a chance to get out, meet people and have some fun.

Attendance

Facilitators have found that some parents who have said they would come to the program may not show up at the first session or may stop coming after one or two sessions. This may be related to other aspects of the parents' lives – for example, child care arrangements, pressure from family members, personal insecurity, transportation problems, changing jobs, moving.

Many participants live from moment to moment and have other concerns. This can affect both their overall commitment to the program and their attendance. It may take encouragement to have people come to the first session and to keep coming.

To encourage attendance at the first session:

- call parents after your first visit to stay in touch before the first session
- send an invitation to parents to remind them of the first session

If you find that parents are not attending regularly after the first session, check in with parents who have missed a session to find out if there is anything they need in order to continue participating. Recognize that there may be some parents who don't wish to continue and that this is their privilege.

Making arrangements

Meeting place

If you are going to work with a group of parents, you will have to arrange for a place to meet. Depending on the size of your group and what's available in your community, this could be in a school, a community centre, a church hall or a house belonging to a local organization. Whatever the facility, you need to check to be sure that it's safe, comfortable, and easy to get to. If you are considering using a space that you have never seen, visit first.

In Section 11, you'll find checklists to help you remember what to look for in a meeting place and what equipment you might need.

Child care

Ask parents about their child care needs and preferences while you are recruiting.

Because all the parents participating in Nobody's Perfect will have at least one child five years old or younger, arrangements will have to be made for child care. Child care arrangements are one of the factors that will affect the time, place, quality and length of your sessions.

Good child care is important. In order for mothers to relax and children to play and learn, it needs to be safe, attractive and fun, with enough child care workers to look after all the children.

Some parents may have friends or relatives who can provide child care for them, but isolated parents may not have this option.

One convenient way of taking care of the children might be to have one or two child care providers (depending on ages and number of children) in the same building where the sessions are held. In this case, you will need volunteer child care workers or money to pay whoever is looking after the children. You may also need funds for renting the child care space or for equipment and refreshments.

Depending on the facilities and the children, this on-site approach may be noisy and distracting. However, it is often the most reassuring and comfortable approach for the parents.

If you decide to meet in the evening, most parents will need child care in their homes. If parents are unable to find – or afford – reliable child care, they will not be able to attend. You need to consider this when scheduling times for sessions.

Check with your sponsoring organization to find out what child care options have worked with previous groups, what it considers to be adequate child care, and what it is able to offer to assist parents. For example, can it offer to help pay for a parent's child care provider?

Transportation

Remember that the closer the parents live to your meeting place, the fewer problems you will have with transportation. Ideally, everybody should be within walking distance but that is often impossible to arrange, especially in rural areas.

If parents live quite far away from the meeting place, you will have to think about how they are going to get there.

- Can any of the parents provide their own transportation?
- Is there a convenient bus service or other public transportation?
- Can parents afford the cost of transportation? If not, can you get funds or help from an agency, a service club or another organization in your area?
- Are there liability or insurance issues that would prevent you or others from transporting parents?
- Do the vehicles transporting parents and children have infant and child car seats?
- Can other parents or community volunteers help with the transportation?
- Can you pick them up yourself?

If your sessions take place during the winter, remember that road and weather conditions may cause problems and plan for possible cancellations.

Because you want to make it as easy as possible for parents to take part in the program, it is best to have the whole issue of transportation in mind when you are recruiting. Transportation can be a big hurdle to overcome, especially when you consider that Nobody's Perfect has been designed for parents who are isolated from a geographic, economic or social point of view.

Refreshments

Most facilitators find that it's a good idea to offer refreshments at the sessions. In some communities, facilitators have found that a local women's association, a community or church group, or local restaurant or bakery is willing to donate refreshments or make a contribution toward them.

Experienced facilitators report that the refreshments can be an important consideration for people with limited means and can draw people to attend. During recruitment, you can ask parents about the kinds of food they enjoy. Some groups like desserts, while others may prefer fruits and vegetables or ethnic dishes. Some Nobody's Perfect groups share a simple meal at the beginning or end of each session. Other groups make the refreshment budget available to participants so they can prepare or bring something special to the group that they would otherwise not be able to afford.

If you are providing child care, you will need to provide a safe and healthy snack for the children.

Organizing Nobody's Perfect groups

Summary of steps

Recruiting parents

- Discuss program details with your sponsoring organization
- Get the names of possible participants
- Contact and have a face-to-face conversation with each parent

Making arrangements

- Meeting place
- Child care
- Transportation
- Refreshments

Section 7

Planning a Nobody's Perfect program



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Planning a Nobody's Perfect program

Planning a Nobody's Perfect program is an ongoing process that involves several basic tasks:

- Find out what this group of parents wants and needs
- Consider group development when planning your program
- Make a general outline for a program
- Decide how your program will be monitored and evaluated

Although these tasks fit into a tidy list on the page, in reality they often happen at the same time or in a different order. For example, while talking to parents about what interests them, you may come up with some interesting ideas for learning activities that you can use in your program outline.

Find out what this group of parents wants and needs

Gathering information about participants' needs and interests is the first step in developing an effective Nobody's Perfect program. Because each program is planned to suit its specific group of participants, parents must be involved in making decisions related to the program at all stages of planning – for example, how the program should be set up, what should be covered during the sessions.

During recruitment, parents may be quite general about their learning needs – *"It would be good to talk about discipline."* As you get to know the parents, you can help them be more specific about what they want to discuss. Be aware of both verbal and non-verbal cues.

The general information you gather during recruitment can be helpful in designing the first session, but identifying parents' interests is an ongoing process. Continue to check with the participants in order to design appropriate activities for the rest of your sessions.

Once your sessions get under way, you can ask at the beginning of each session if there is anything the participants would like to talk about – topics other than those previously planned or particular aspects of the planned topic. At the end of the session, you can ask for ideas about what they would like to discuss in the next session. For example:

- **In your introduction**, ask parents if the topics that have been planned are still relevant or if they would like to make changes or additions. Recognize that unexpected events in the community can provide an opportunity for discussing a topic while interest is high and be prepared for changes. For example, though you may have planned to discuss toys and play, if a local child has been injured by a motor vehicle, parents will be concerned about that and more eager to talk about safety issues. If there has been an outbreak of lice or if there have been news reports about a high number of cases of a particular illness, parents may want to talk about their children's health.
- **At the end of each session**, check with the parents to be sure that the information they wanted has been covered and to ask what they'd like to discuss next time.

Questions you might ask at the end of a session include:

- ♦ *From what has happened so far, I'm getting the feeling that we could spend more time talking about _____. Would you like to continue with this next time?*
- ♦ *Tonight we focused on _____. Have we covered everything you hoped we would?*
- ♦ *Are there any topics that we've touched on during this session that you would like to talk more about?*
- ♦ *Our topic next time is _____. What are the first words that come to mind when you think about this topic?*

"I've found that asking questions about parents' needs at the end of a session is where you get the really rich stuff about what they want to learn. They are more excited and involved then and can be clearer about what they want to learn."

Facilitator

Talking to parents between sessions can be another way to gather useful insights into their interests. Sometimes a phone call to ask for help in putting out a snack can be a way to get important information about what a parent wants to learn.

As you talk to parents in their homes and during sessions, you will get to know them better. You may see that they have needs they have not discussed with you or the group. For example, some parents may be so absorbed in their children's needs that they make little time for themselves. Or you may gather from comments during discussions that some parents seem concerned about how to discipline their children in public situations, but they are not comfortable about being the one to bring this up. It is important to check these kinds of impressions about parents' needs with the group before you develop activities.

One way to check out needs is to ask a general question that deals with an impression – for example, *“Do you think parents spend enough time on themselves?”* or *“Are temper tantrums in public places a problem for you? Perhaps we should deal with this in the next session.”*

Another way to check impressions is to share your own feelings about a topic. *“Sometimes I feel I don't get enough time for myself. Does anyone else have this problem? . . . Perhaps we could deal with this next week.”* Or, *“I can still remember my daughter having her first temper tantrum in a supermarket. Have any of you had this experience recently?”*

Determining parents' needs and interests is an ongoing activity that begins during recruitment and continues throughout the entire program.

Consider group development when planning your program

Every group has its own identity and life cycle. During a program, the individuals in your group will grow and change and so will the group as a whole. Be conscious of this process of group development and plan your program around it.

Five stages of group development

STAGE ONE: COMING TOGETHER

Every group starts out as a collection of individuals. When people first come together, they feel nervous and anxious. They wonder if they'll like the group and worry about whether they'll fit in. At this stage, participants are looking for things they have in common. Activities that are structured, that offer parents the opportunity to talk to one another, are fun, easy, and explore their interests can be effective. Most people are more relaxed in a small group than in a large one, so it's helpful to plan for small group discussions and activities in the early sessions.

STAGE TWO: CHALLENGING

Participants in a group tend to be on their best behaviour when meeting new people. They may be reluctant to disagree or to express an opinion until they have a better idea about how others in the group will respond. When they feel more comfortable, they feel free to be themselves and want to find a unique place for themselves in the group.

One way to tell that your group is beginning to come together is when the discussions become more lively. That's when parents begin to say what they really think and to disagree with one another. At this stage, it may look like your group is not working. People may argue and get off topic. This can be uncomfortable but it is a normal part of group development. It is actually a good sign.

This is a time to cultivate your sense of humour. Take advantage of the energy participants are bringing to the group by planning activities and choosing topics that encourage them to express opinions and take a stand. Topics such as Health, Safety, or Caring for Ourselves as Parents allow for thought-provoking, lively discussion without creating dissension in the group or threatening the safety of participants. Avoid controversial and highly emotional topics

STAGE THREE: LEARNING TO WORK TOGETHER

Once participants have established their individuality within the group, they can begin to connect with one another, explore the interests and issues they have in common, and look for ways to work together and relate to one another. At this stage, activities that explore values and ideas can be effective.

STAGE FOUR: PRODUCING RESULTS AS A GROUP

By this point, participants are comfortable with themselves and with the group. They are ready to work together and to focus on addressing their specific interests and concerns. Activities that are structured and involve the group as a whole can work well. So can activities that support efforts to apply new ideas and approaches. This is a great time to introduce the problem-solving approach or work with challenging situations such as discipline.

STAGE FIVE: SAYING GOODBYE

Saying goodbye is very important and can be difficult for participants. For some parents, saying goodbye has always involved anger and rejection. Many participants consider the program a highlight of their week and look forward to taking part in the sessions, to seeing the other parents and to the support they receive from the group. This is a lot to lose!

Include activities in the last several sessions to help ease this transition – for example, encourage parents to plan a reunion, exchange phone numbers, or make plans to get together at play groups or a family resource centre.

Saying goodbye brings up complex emotions for both participants and facilitator. For your final session, plan activities that will give parents the opportunity to think about their experience in the group, acknowledge their feelings and bring the group to a close.

“Understanding the stages that groups go through has really helped me to see the second stage [Challenging] as a good thing and not to despair when everything seems to be falling apart. I’ve noticed that each time the group meets it seems to go through these stages too.”

Facilitator

Make a general outline for the program

When you make a general outline, you decide what topics you will deal with during each session of a program. When your general outline is complete, you will have a complete overview of your program on a single page.

An outline gives both you and the parents a clear sense of how the program is set up and where it is going on a session-to-session basis. **Your outline is not set in stone. Programs work best when they are open to change in response to parents’ needs and interests.**

Expect to make many changes and adjustments to your outlines as your program goes forward and the participants’ interests develop and change. For example, you may have planned to focus on health and illness in the second session but decide to change your plan when parents make it clear that their biggest need is learning how to create more time for themselves. The program outline can be a useful tool to involve participants in making decisions about what they really want to do. For example, if participants would like to carry a discussion on stress into the next session, they can decide what topics should be moved or cut.

You may need to revise your outline several times during the course of a program. A blank Program Outline form is included in Section 11. Make lots of copies!

The general outline you create at the beginning of a program is based on:

- the interests and expectations you gathered from parents during recruitment
- the information you got from your sponsoring organization
- your perceptions about what parents want to learn
- the five stages of group development

To make your general outline:

- Make a summary of the important information about your group – number of single mothers and fathers, couples, approximate ages of parents (if wide range), number of children at each age, and so forth.
- Make a list of the interests and expectations of parents.
- Pick out the topics that seem to be of the most interest and list them.
- Put the topics in order with those most frequently mentioned at the top.
- Thinking about the five stages of development, decide where each topic will work best in your outline.
- Add any ideas for activities that come to mind while you are filling in the outline.

When creating your general outline, keep in mind that certain activities need to happen in specific sessions.

In the first sessions, you will need to allow time:

- for parents to meet one another and start to feel comfortable in the group
- for participants to look over the parent books
- for the facilitator to learn more about parents' needs and expectations
- for the group to make agreements about how they will work together

In the second to third session, you will need to be prepared for parents to begin:

- to express their individual viewpoints strongly
- to argue
- to take sides

- to disregard their own agreements
- to laugh, make jokes, not take things seriously or take them too seriously

In the next sessions, parents will benefit from:

- less close supervision from you
- time to get into their issues and use the tools of Nobody's Perfect

In the last session, parents will need time:

- to think about what they have learned in the program
- to make plans and build ongoing support networks
- to complete the evaluation form
- to talk with you about the program in general and how they feel about it
- to say goodbye to the group

As this sample shows, the program outline is a place to collect ideas and think about a possible flow for the entire program. It is not designed to include all the details and activities of each session. This sample outline is for a program which covers six sessions. Nobody's Perfect programs are flexible and the number of sessions may vary. The Program Outline form can be adapted to allow you to make an outline for your program regardless of the number of sessions.



A sample program outline

REMEMBER: Your program outline will be based on your participants' interests and the number of sessions you will have.

Every program outline will be different.

Session #1

- Introductions/getting acquainted
- Expectations/hopes
- Agreements for working together
- Review of NP Resources

Ideas:

- Draw picture of kids
- Discuss agreements – use flip chart
- Use BEHAVIOUR and SAFETY books as examples of how books work
- Group discussion on how session went

Session #2

- Health – preventing illness; signs of health and illness
- Child care options

Ideas:

- How do I know if a child is sick?
 - share experiences with sick children
 - role play parent and child in emergency sickness situation
- BODY book
- Brainstorm a list of local child care options
- PARENT book

Session #3

- Helping children feel safe, secure and loved
- Different needs at different ages
- Toys to make and find

Ideas:

- Discussion: parents need to be safe, secure and loved, just like children
- PARENT book
- Make play dough together; bring cookie cutters, etc.
- Home assignment: make inexpensive, safe toy to bring next time
- MIND book

Session #4

- Causes of injuries
- Child proofing your home
- Fostering a support network

Ideas:

- Draw a map of your home / mark X for unsafe spots
- Look for something unsafe in your purse/bag
- “Show & Tell” about safe toys parents have brought from home
- SAFETY book
- Ask parents about behaviour issues they are especially concerned about

Session #5

- Helping kids behave
- What to expect at different ages
- Fostering a support network

Ideas:

- Brainstorm “perfect kids” and “perfect parents”
- Problem solving for specific issues
- Different approaches for different ages
- BEHAVIOUR book

Session #6

- Conclusion: reflection, next steps, evaluation, saying good-bye

Ideas:

- Share learning from group
- Things to stop, start, keep doing
- Staying in touch
- Celebration, food

Decide how your program will be monitored and evaluated

There are two parts to keeping track of your program:

- **Monitoring**, on a session-by-session basis, what parents are learning, what they like and dislike and what changes or adjustments you should be making to your program outline.
- **Evaluating**, at the end of the program, how well the program met the parents' expectations, what they learned and what they think they will use in their daily lives.

Before a program starts, it's a good idea to talk with your sponsoring organization about their expectations for monitoring and evaluation and what it has found to be an effective approach for its programs.

In Section 11, you'll find blank Session Log and Program Log forms to copy. These give you a quick and easy way to record, for each session and for the program as a whole, how things went, what worked, what didn't, and what you'd do differently next time. Keep these with your planning materials so you can refer to them as you plan future programs and sessions.

In the long run, keeping good records can save you a lot of time!

Monitoring

Monitoring happens on a session-by-session basis. It's an informal way of keeping track of how things are going in the group, what they seem to be enjoying and what you're learning.

Some facilitators make brief notes on their session plans to refresh their memories when they plan future sessions – for example, *"This was fun!"* or *"This didn't go over well and I think it's because . . ."* *"Next time, allow more time here."*

Experienced facilitators follow a plan but remain flexible about making changes so that they respond to what happens in a group. Some of the best sessions happen when you get a little "off-track" and you may find it helpful for future planning if you note on your session plan where you changed direction and what caused the change.

The most common form of monitoring is simply asking parents, at the end of each session, to talk briefly about how they think it went. Information about how to do this is in Section 8. You can also use activities or tools to monitor how participants feel in relation to the group. See Section 9 for examples.

When you have finished each session, complete a Session Log form while the session is still fresh in your mind. This will give you a permanent record of how each of your sessions went.

Information about how many parents have participated in Nobody's Perfect and what that experience meant to them is very helpful for those who are coordinating and funding Nobody's Perfect programs.

After the group has finished, be sure to complete and return whatever reporting forms are used in your province or territory so that your groups are included.

Evaluation

There are many simple ways to evaluate your program. For example, you can give participants specific questions to be answered in a small group. Each group can record their answers and share them with the large group. In some groups, it can be appropriate to have participants fill out a simple evaluation form at the end of the program.

Most facilitators build evaluation into the final session. (Sample Evaluation Forms are included in Section 11.)

Evaluation is looking for three things:

- Reaction – what did the parents like most and least about the program?
- Learning – what did the parents learn from the program?
- Impact – how are the parents using what they learned in their daily lives?

Having parents participate in an evaluation activity or, if appropriate, complete an evaluation form which can give you information about their reaction to the program and what they feel they've learned.

Evaluating the impact of the program on parents' daily lives is trickier. You can ask parents what they are using that is new from the Nobody's Perfect group. However, evaluating impact requires knowing what the parents are actually doing differently as a result of the program. If you are interested in evaluating impact, you will need to talk to your sponsoring organization about appropriate ways of doing it.

Complete a Program Log at the end of each program. In combination with your Session Logs, it will give you a tool that will help you to build on your experiences and grow as a facilitator.



Section 8

Planning each session



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Planning each session

Once you have created a general outline for a program, you will be able to plan your sessions. There are two steps to this:

- Decide what you want to accomplish during each session
- Make a plan that will help you accomplish it

While it's necessary to make a *program plan* before the sessions start, it's not a good idea to spend a lot of time working on the details of each session plan before the program begins. This is because there are bound to be changes from session to session. If you plan too far in advance, you'll end up redoing a lot of your plans.

Decide what you want to do and how you want to do it

The first step in planning a session is to set objectives – that is, what you would like participants to come away from that session with.

In general, Nobody's Perfect can influence what parents **know**, how they **do** things, and how they **think** and **feel** about themselves and their children.

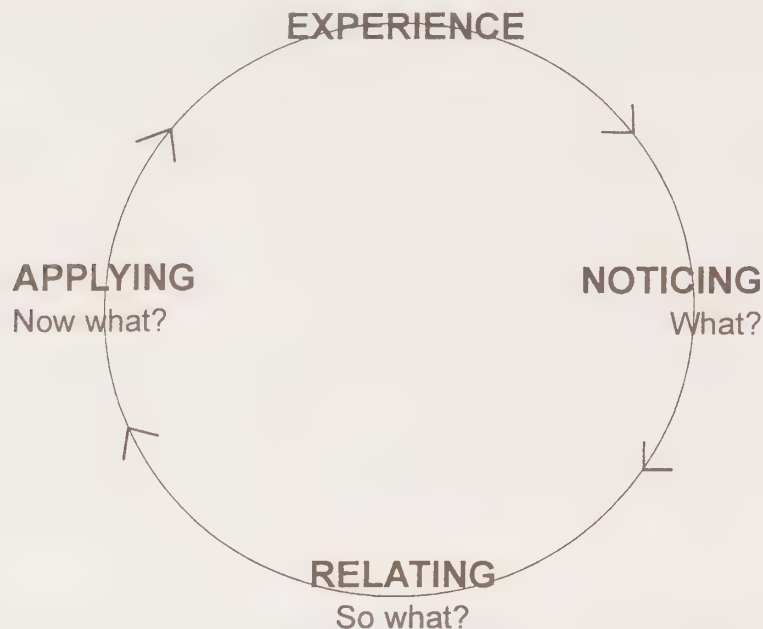
During recruitment, you'll have begun to get some ideas about the issues and topics that interest the parents in your group. When you develop your program outline, these will be your guide in choosing the topics you'll address during your program.

When planning your sessions, you will be getting more specific. Design activities and experiences related to these issues that will give participants the opportunity to:

- learn something
- do something
- examine the way they think or feel about something

Learning something is a **knowledge objective**; doing something is a **skill objective**; addressing thoughts and feelings is an **attitude objective**.

The activities you use to achieve these objectives can be based on the experiential learning cycle.



Each activity, regardless of the kind of objective being worked on, should include:

- an **experience**
- an opportunity for participants to **notice** the details of the experience
- an opportunity for participants to examine and **relate** the meaning of that experience to themselves personally
- an opportunity for participants to develop approaches for **applying** this understanding to parenting and/or daily life

The types of objectives you choose affect the kinds of activities you create for your session.

- Parents can gain new information (knowledge objective) through activities such as discussions, presentations, demonstrations and by using information resources such as the parent books.
- Parents can learn to do something (skill objective) through activities such as playing a part (for example, acting out a conflict), or practice sessions (for example, making a list of things to do for childproofing your home or creating a budget) which help develop skills.

- Parents can explore thoughts and feelings (attitude objective) through discussion, talking about a video, playing a part or participating in activities such as those described in Section 9.

Include a variety of objectives in each session so that you will appeal to as many parents as possible. A session which deals only with increasing knowledge may not appeal to parents who would prefer to be sharing experiences. Similarly, a session with too strong an emphasis on attitudes may be boring for parents who want practical information they can use right away.

You should also consider the developmental stage of your group when designing learning activities (see Section 7). Different activities will be more or less effective depending on your group's stage of development.

One of the goals of Nobody's Perfect is that parents have the opportunity to build support networks that continue after the program is over. In your planning, think about ways that you can encourage mutual aid in every session, so that supportive relationships among participants are gradually strengthened.

Make a plan that will help you accomplish your objectives

Once you know the learning objectives, the next step is to make a plan that will help your group accomplish these objectives. A session plan includes the topics you will cover and the activities you will use.

The objectives, content and activities will be different for each of your sessions. But the basic format of a session always remains the same.

Each session always has three parts: a beginning (Opening), a middle (Main Part) and an end (Closing).

Beginning (Opening)

In every session, the first few minutes are spent settling in and making the transition from home. Warming-up and catching-up activities can facilitate this transition. When you encourage parents to reflect on their experiences between sessions and share them with the group, you are inviting everyone back into the work of supporting each other. The Opening also provides a time for talking about what will be covered in the session. The Opening sets the tone for the session and gives parents the chance to get better acquainted and settle into the group.

Middle (Main Part)

During most sessions, the middle part is where you will spend most of your time. This is where topics are developed, discussions held, skills practised and activities carried out.

End (Closing)

In every session, the Closing is when you sum up the main points covered during the session and ask parents for feedback on what they are taking home from the session. You can use this time to ask for information about what direction the next session should take.

In the same way that each learning activity you use can reflect the experiential learning cycle, your session as a whole can also follow the same structure. The session is the experience and the Closing offers an opportunity for participants to notice what happened, reflect on their experience and understand what it means to them, and think about how they will apply what they've noticed and understood about the experience.

A good Closing eases the transition back to home and leaves participants looking forward to coming to the next session.

Planning the opening to your session

The Opening usually includes:

- Welcoming
- Warming-up activity or activities
- Checking-in
- Setting the stage for today's topic

Welcome

Part of setting the tone for each session is created by the way the room is set up ready for the group and by the way you greet and welcome the group members. A hot drink, a tasty tidbit, a lovely smell, flowers or the room decorated to invite exploration all may form part of your welcome.

Warming-up

Beginning with an activity that is fun, lively and leads into the topic of the day provides an opportunity for participants to set aside the stresses of daily life and focus on being in the group. Some sample warm-up activities will be found in Section 9, on pages 153-156.

Checking-in

Have a round either before or after your warming-up activity to allow participants to reflect back on the week, perhaps remembering what they had chosen as homework and how it went, or sharing what they are leaving at the door in order to fully be in the group. Some may want to use this time to ask questions left over from past sessions. Design a specific way to check in with everyone that doesn't take too much time away from the main part of the session.

Setting the stage for today's topic

You can set the stage in an infinite number of ways. You may refer to a news item, tell a brief story, hold up a picture, remind them of the way in which today's topic was chosen, or refer to the experience of the check-in or the warm-up activity if either was linked to the topic.

Planning the main part of your session

The main part of the session will take up over half your time – both in planning and in doing. This is when you cover the topics you and the parents have agreed on and work on achieving their objectives.

Because adults learn best when they participate actively, most of the Main Part of your sessions will be spent in activities that give parents something to do or talk about. You'll find information and directions for learning activities in Section 9, pages 115-168.

When they first begin working with Nobody's Perfect, many facilitators worry about how they will fill up the time – two hours can seem very long. Experienced facilitators see a different problem: they wonder why they never have enough time. Two hours seem to go by in a flash. The most common mistake that new facilitators make is trying to pack too much into each session. It's very easy to underestimate the amount of time it can take for a group to complete an activity and to overestimate the amount of time you have.

Different kinds of activities take more or less time. Different groups of parents work at different paces. Some groups will want to spend a lot of time on a few topics. Others will want to cover many topics quickly. As you gain experience as a facilitator, you'll develop skills and experience that will help you to make accurate guesses about the amount of time each group will need for each activity. It is also helpful to make notes on your session plans or your session log about how long activities have taken. This can help in future planning.

Being flexible is the key to successful sessions. For example, at the beginning of a session you may sometimes find that to respond to the group's needs, you must completely change the content and activities that you've planned so carefully. Or, as you go through a session, you may also find that the group isn't enjoying the activities you've planned. In this case, you need to stop, check with them about what's happening, and be prepared to start something new.

To prepare a well-balanced and well-organized session:

- Choose topics and learning objectives based on information from the participants about what they want and need.
- Use learning activities to encourage the participation of parents.
- Choose different types of learning activities to give your session variety and to appeal to parents who have different ways of learning.
- Check your learning activities to ensure that they reflect the experiential learning cycle.
- Make sure that you have enough time to adequately deal with the topics of most interest to parents. Estimate the amount of time required for each learning activity and budget your time. Although you are aware of the time, participants should feel as if they have all the time they need without feeling rushed.

Planning the closing of your session

Most Closings include the following activities:

- Summary
- Reflecting
- Monitoring
- Next session
- Ongoing support

This can seem like a lot to do, but each activity should take only a few minutes.

Summary

Each session reflects the experiential learning cycle, and the conclusion offers an opportunity for parents to notice, consider and apply what they've learned. A summary offers the opportunity for parents to recall what happened during the session.

A summary should be very brief. The idea is to remind parents of what they have experienced. If your summary is long and complicated, parents will have a hard time remembering the essential points.

Reflecting

It is important to give parents time to reflect on what they've learned or experienced during the session and on how they might use that learning in their daily lives. You will also get some idea about whether you met your objectives for the session.

Some reflective questions you might use include:

- *What stands out for you when you think back on our session tonight?*
- *Based on your reflection,*
 - ♦ *What's one thing you will stop doing?*
 - ♦ *What's one thing you will start doing?*
 - ♦ *What's one thing you will continue doing?*
- *What's one thing you know you will do this week based on having been here today?*

Monitoring

Monitoring is an informal check-in that comes at the end of each session. The idea is to get immediate feedback from parents that will help you improve your sessions. This kind of feedback can be useful for determining how parents feel about a session.

Giving verbal feedback can be difficult for some participants who may feel as though they are criticizing. They may be afraid of hurting your feelings or that you'll be angry if they say something negative.

Discuss the purpose of evaluation and monitoring during your first session so that parents will understand why it is important. You may also want to emphasize that constructive feedback helps make sure that the sessions respond to parents' needs.

Monitoring questions could include:

- *What did you like most about the session?*
- *What did you like least about the session?*
- *What part of the session was most useful to you?*
- *What did you learn or rediscover today?*
- *What would make our session even more useful to you?*

Keep in mind that in the closing of the final session, you'll be evaluating the program as a whole.

Next session

This part of the Closing reminds parents about the time and place for the next session, and asks for their input.

Questions that encourage parents to contribute to the content of the next session include:

- *Is there anything we talked about today that you want to talk more about next time?*
- *Based on the topics you've suggested, here's what I was planning to do next session. What do you think we should spend the most time on?*
- *What other topics would you like to look at next time?*
- *How about if you look through the SAFETY book between now and our next meeting? Perhaps you could pick out some pictures or subjects you'd like to talk about next time.*

Ongoing support

One of the goals of Nobody's Perfect is to encourage mutual support among parents both during the program and after it is over. Activities which involve parents supporting one another or help parents stay in contact will contribute to that goal. These kinds of activities can be woven throughout the program and emphasized in the last few sessions.

Ways to facilitate ongoing contact among the parents in your group include:

- Give the parents an opportunity to exchange phone numbers (unless your group agreements for working together prevent this).
- Ask the parents to form pairs and do an assignment over the phone. This gives parents a valid reason for calling each other.
- Establish a telephone chain so that the parents can remind each other of the time and place for the next session.
- During the sessions, listen for ways in which parents can help each other out. This can be anything from exchanging recipes to talking together about a common problem.
- Take time to reinforce verbally what people have in common. A remark such as “*Beth noticed that too,*” could provide the incentive for parents to see or phone each other.
- During the last several sessions, you may want to explore some specific ways that parents can continue to support each other after the program has ended.

Session outline overview

Opening

- Welcome, check-in
- Warm-up activity (related to topic whenever possible)
- Setting the stage for the topic

Main part

- Activity or experience to introduce the topic
- Working with the topic

Closing

- Summary
- Reflection
- Monitoring
- Next session
- Ongoing support

Your program as a whole follows this pattern too. Your first session is the Opening, your last session is the Closing, and the sessions in between are the Main Part. The first and last sessions, therefore, have a different focus and structure than the others.

Planning the first session

The whole of the first session is the Opening to your program. It has a small Main Part and an important lead in to the next session at the Closing.

The first session includes:

- Welcome, introductions
- Getting to know one another
- Checking-in: Expectations
- Creating comfort and safety: Agreements
- Introduction to Nobody's Perfect
- Next session
- Closing

Welcome and introductions

Since participants in Nobody's Perfect may be ill at ease in groups or feeling unsure and uncomfortable, greeting them individually and re-making the contact which was formed in your initial conversation with them is important.

The set-up of the room is one way that you set the tone. Does it look different than school? Is it warm and inviting? Does it smell welcoming (coffee, hot apple juice)? Is there a visual focus to the room? What sounds welcome the parents? Is there music (from their culture, calming)? Is it obvious where participants will sit or what they will do (have a coffee, make a name tag)?

Welcome the participants, have them be seated and re-introduce yourself/yourselves. Mention some things about yourself and your experiences that the parents might have in common with you.

Getting to know one another

As a general rule, people appreciate not having to speak out in a group to introduce themselves or others until they have spoken to a few people. Having several laughs together is a great way to get comfortable. One or two structured activities that involve sharing interesting and fun things about themselves in small groups will help participants get to know each other and find things they have in common before introducing themselves in the large group. This part of the first session may take 45 minutes or even longer and should not feel rushed. It is critical to the forming of the group.

Checking-in: expectations

In this first session, it is useful to give participants a chance to re-visit what they would like the group to be like and what topics they would like to think about, learn about, or ask questions about by the end of the program. Make a list to post that can be added to.

Creating comfort and safety: agreements

It's important to arrive at these agreements during the first session and to find a way for participants to keep them in mind during the sessions. One way to encourage parents to remember these agreements is to print them on sheets of paper and decorate them with coloured designs and pictures cut from magazines. These can then be posted during each session.

Taking a conversation approach can be a very effective approach to developing agreements. For example:

"We're going to be spending time together, so let's think about what things will allow us to feel comfortable. For example, what do we want to do when someone's late? Should we wait for them? Or begin and welcome them when they come?"

Other points on which groups might want to come to agreements include:

- What if someone interrupts when another person is talking?
- What if someone outside our group overhears you talking about what happened during one of our sessions?
- What if someone wants to smoke during a session?
- What else would help you feel comfortable and safe in this group?

Responding to disclosure of child abuse or neglect

One thing that needs to be agreed on is what the group will do if someone discloses that a child is being hurt or is in danger. Provincial laws require that abuse be reported, and it is important for this fact to be introduced to the group in a non-threatening and supportive way. For example:

“Until recently, we haven’t had many laws to protect children. Now, because we recognize the importance and value of our children, we have laws that say that any adult who knows or thinks that a child is being hurt or is in danger has to report it. How should we handle this in our group?”

Introduction to Nobody's Perfect

A brief introduction to the program might sound like this:

“This is a group for young parents of preschool children. It is about whatever you want it to be. It can be about how challenging it is to have a life and be a parent. It can be about sharing parenting when we have different ideas about how to do it. It can be about what babies and toddlers need from their parents. It can be about anything to do with the challenges as we see them. This program is available across Canada and is an exciting way that the federal, provincial and territorial governments recognize young parents. It is not a program you attend because you need to or have to. It does not have the “right” answers. It is an opportunity to reflect on what we are doing, what we want to be doing, and what would support us.”

Next session

The following is one way you could introduce the topic for the next session:

“The topics that seemed to be of most interest were As we are just getting to know each other, I/we thought we would focus on ... next session. What should we be sure to include? What particular interests do you have in this topic?”

During the group’s early stages, be careful not to throw the choice of topics wide open. Some topics and issues work better after the group has been going for a while.

Planning the final session

The whole of the final session forms the Closing to your program. It starts with an Opening, and the majority of the time is spent on the Closing.

The concluding or final session includes:

- Welcome
- Warm-up
- Check-in
- Setting the stage for closing
- Summarizing or gathering up the experiences of the preceding sessions
- Evaluating
- Ongoing support
- Acknowledging one another
- Acknowledging feelings
- Celebrating



Sample session plan for first session

You'll find Session Planning Sheets in Section 11 on page 185. Make lots of copies to use in planning your sessions.

The following sample session plan has been completed to give you an idea about what happens during a session and the amount of time that one facilitator has allowed for each activity.

Session plans are a tool to help you estimate what you can cover in a session and help you to keep track of time during a session. You don't need to account for the time minute by minute. In planning your session, you should be aware of time, but not obsessed with it. If you find yourself going back over your plan and shaving minutes off each activity to allow you to fit more in, you should probably ask yourself if you are trying to do too much in the session.

Remember, flexibility is the key. If parents are deeply involved in a discussion or activity that is important to them, you shouldn't cut them off just so you can keep to your schedule.

Session plans can seem very dry. They don't show all of the fun, the interactions of parents, the humour, and the feelings of accomplishment that parents experience in this program. These are the real rewards of facilitating!

Sample Session Planning Sheet

Session # 1 (2 hours)

Date: _____

Learning Objectives:

Parents will have the opportunity to:

1. Get to know other members in the group
2. Have fun
3. Learn everyone's name
4. Say what they hope to get from the group
5. Decide what will make the group safe and comfortable
6. See the topics the group chose
7. Be introduced to the experiential learning cycle as closure

Time	Topic	Activities	Nobody's Perfect Books	Equipment Resources Reminder
30 minutes	Welcome, Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce each facilitator briefly • "Getting to know you" activity — BINGO • NOTICE commonalities 		BINGO ideas: likes a certain rock star or movie star, born in a certain country or town. Make it fun
40 minutes	Agreements Wish List	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion • Brainstorm 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flip chart/markers • Remember to include "what ifs" around issue of confidentiality, dating when group is mixed, disclosure about child abuse or neglect
15 minutes	BREAK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refreshments: coffee, tea, veggies with dip, squares 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring recipes for treats served
10 minutes	Topics to be highlighted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List in order of importance to the group. Choose topic for next week based on your plan and group's early stage. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flip chart
15 minutes	Experiential Learning Cycle	Introduce experiential learning cycle by checking what they noticed, connected with and will see, do or think about differently		Do not <i>teach</i> in the first session; introduce through informal conversation
10 minutes	Closing	Round		What was surprising in today's group? What are you looking forward to next week?

Facilitator's tips . . . for planning the first session

- Give everyone time to get to know each other in small groups before expecting them to speak out in the larger group.
- Make it fun and funny to get to know each other.
- Create the illusion of lots of time. Do not rush or cram things into the first session.
- Focus on the participant's experience and choices. This lets them know it will not be like school.



Section 9

Activities and tools



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Activities and tools

Activities in groups

A learning activity is a tool facilitators use to create an environment in which parents can achieve their learning objectives. An effective learning activity involves the parents actively and helps them to recognize and use the skills they have while building new ones.

To use learning activities effectively, facilitators need to be both prepared and flexible. Prepared, because it takes thought and planning to select or develop learning activities that each different group of parents will enjoy and learn from. Flexible, because your prepared activities won't always work quite the way you hope and you will need to improvise and change direction quickly. Part of being flexible is to avoid getting too attached or comfortable with any one type of activity.

This section contains tools and some sample activities to help get you started. Keep in mind that you will need to adapt all these activities and create many others to suit your particular situation and the needs and interests of the parents you work with. Any activity you use or develop can reflect the experiential learning cycle which offers participants an opportunity to notice, consider and apply an experience.

Although the activities and tools in this section can be adapted and used in one-on-one situations, they are presented here as they would be used with a group.

Basically, a "group" consists of two or more people. Most Nobody's Perfect groups have between 6 and 12 participants. However, to make it easier for everyone to have a chance to speak and to provide variety in your session plans, it can be an advantage to break the group into smaller units. You can do this by asking parents to form their own groups or you can choose some arbitrary system for forming the groups – for example, everyone with a birthday in January to June, in one group; everyone born from July to December in the other. Whatever method you choose, it's important, especially in the early stages of the group, to ensure that the participants are part of different groups and don't always end up in the same small group.

Most facilitators start and finish their sessions with all the parents together in a single group. At other times during sessions, breaking into smaller groups can give parents more opportunities to talk and share experiences. Groups can be divided in several ways:

- **Solo:** Parent works alone
 - ◆ suitable for jotting down ideas
 - ◆ essential for thinking time
- **Pairs and Trios:** Parents work in twos or threes
 - ◆ suitable for brainstorming, discussing a question, completing a task, practising a skill, sharing personal experiences
 - ◆ good for helping parents ease into talking in a group
- **Fours to Sixes:** Parents work in fairly large groupings
 - ◆ good when doing tasks, demonstrations, playing parts, answering questions, etc.
 - ◆ useful when you want parents to hear four or five different points of view on a topic
- **Total Group:** Parents stay together as a single group
 - ◆ suitable for presentations to all parents or for describing a task
 - ◆ good for making agreements about working together and for opening and closing a session
 - ◆ good in the later sessions when you want to build a sense of mutual support

Be sure that you give clear instructions to parents before they break into groups.

- Set the stage for discussion or the issue to be addressed.
- Check to make sure everyone understands what they should do. Don't assume that the group has understood your instructions. Allow time to clarify and answer questions.
- Tell the groups how much time they will have.
- If necessary, you can ask each group to be prepared to summarize their discussion for the whole group.
- You may wish to spend some time with each group in order to provide support and assistance if needed.

Facilitators' tips . . . for working with smaller groups

- Many people feel more comfortable speaking in front of two or three other people, rather than a big group, especially when the group is new and participants are just getting to know one another. Parents can often get more done and get to know each other better in small groups.
- The larger the size of the group, the less “talking time” each individual parent will have.
- Be sure the topic and purpose of the small group are very clear. If they're not, or if the parents aren't interested or motivated, the discussions may turn into chit-chat that goes nowhere.
- Don't interfere once the small groups are working. When you have assigned a task and the group understands it and is working on it, let them proceed on their own. You can decide whether to intervene if you notice that they are finished or are getting stuck. Remember to respect the integrity of the group and keep your participation to a minimum.
- Stay available when small groups are working in case a group wants to invite your participation.

Tools for learning

Several basic tools are used to create most learning activities. These are:

- Rounds
- Brainstorming
- Games
- Asking questions
- Discussions
- Playing a part
- An approach to problems
- Presentations

A single session or topic may use one or more of these tools. For example, if the *objective* is to become more aware of the early signs of illness, common illnesses in children and how to decide when to go to the doctor or Emergency

department, you might begin by **brainstorming** what can be seen in the early stages of illness. This could be followed by a **discussion** on the illnesses of children and what symptoms tell us about what the illness is. Small groups of three or four parents could discuss what they can do for their children to relieve their symptoms. At this time they could look in the BODY book, and learn to use it as a resource. To complete the activity, you could use a **round** to allow each participant to say one thing they would take away from this activity and use at home.

In this learning activity, you are using three basic tools: brainstorming, discussion, and rounds in addition to using the program resource, the BODY book.

Think about all of the tools described here and remember to use a variety. Keep in mind that:

- No one tool or approach is perfect. An activity may work well for one topic area and be completely inappropriate for another. Or one activity might work well with one group and be a total flop with another group.
- Each one must be adapted to suit the needs of the parents in your group. For example, you need to consider the literacy levels of the parents in your group, their age, their cultural backgrounds and other factors when deciding whether or not a particular learning activity would be effective for a particular group of parents.

Different parents learn in different ways. It is important to include a variety of different activities in every session so that all the parents will find something that interests them and keeps them involved.

When you choose your activities, **don't forget the time factor**. Remember to think about how much time you will have with the parents. Some activities take longer than others and you need to budget your time. If parents are deeply involved in an activity, don't cut them off just to keep to a schedule. However, if the group spends a lot of time on one activity, you'll need to ask for their ideas about how to proceed. Experience will help you learn which activities require the most time. However, even experienced facilitators are challenged to be flexible when a planned activity takes more or less time than anticipated.

Tools for learning: rounds

In a round, each person in the group responds in turn to a particular question.

The aim of a round is to give everybody a chance to participate. A round allows shy parents to speak and encourages talkative parents to listen. In a round:

- Each person speaks in turn. Nobody comments or interrupts while another person is talking.
- Each person has more or less the same amount of time to speak. (Ask participants to be brief, or a round can use up a lot of time.)

A round is useful for gathering opinions and reactions in order to establish a basis for discussion. It provides a structured way for members of a group to get to know each other and to get used to speaking in a group. For example, in the first session parents can introduce themselves in a round.

A round may be effective when there is a lot of side chatter in a group. It gives everyone a chance to speak. It is also useful when a group has both very quiet and very talkative members.

You can use a round for the reflection activity which forms part of your conclusion. A round is a quick and easy way to involve everyone.

Although a round is an invitation for each participant to speak in turn, it is possible to pass or speak at the end.

Facilitators' tips . . . for using a round

- Start the round with someone who is comfortable being the first to speak. Ask who is ready to begin.
- A round can be an effective tool for check-ins and closings.
- A round can be a way of providing an opportunity for each person to speak.

Tools for learning: brainstorming

Brainstorming is a tool for creating lots of ideas and suggestions. Brainstorming encourages the group to participate actively. It generates lots of ideas from parents – ideas that can form the basis of a productive discussion or other activity. It also can be fun!

The aim of this approach is to get as many ideas as possible in a short time – no more than two or three minutes. The ideas can be used in a number of ways. They can provide a range of options to choose from, form the basis for a discussion or help solve a problem.

Brainstorming can be done in a group of any size. To use brainstorming:

- Explain the purpose of the activity to the parents.

“We’re going to take a few minutes to see how many ideas we can come up with for healthy snacks that toddlers like to eat. We can talk about the ideas later.”

- Write the topic on a flip chart or blackboard and make sure that everyone understands.
- Ask everyone to contribute ideas, no matter how crazy they may seem. Encourage everyone to call out their ideas as soon as they think of them.
- Use a blackboard or flip chart to record all the suggestions, exactly as they are said. Don’t put them into your words.

After you have written down all the suggestions or ideas, you can move into a discussion or other activity based on the ideas you’ve come up with.

Facilitators’ tips . . . for brainstorming

- Work quickly.
- Accept all ideas.
- Write down the exact words that were said.

Remember, commenting is not a part of brainstorming.

Tools for learning: games

Games can give parents a chance to be playful and have fun while they are learning. They are great “tone-setters” and can be a good way to lift everyone’s energy level.

Some participants may not have the experience of adults playing with them when they were young or may not have happy memories of playing competitive games as children. By using game playing as an activity, parents can discover how much fun games can be. This in turn will encourage them to play games with their children. Games can be a useful tool with all parents, including ones with low literacy skills.

When possible, choose or design a game that is cooperative rather than competitive, so that parents work together to play the game.

Games can be chosen to fit a particular topic, as in the following examples.

- **Putting the puzzle pieces together.** Find or make a large picture which shows something you want to talk about and cut it into a number of puzzle-shaped pieces. Give everyone a piece and ask them to work together to put the puzzle together on the floor or a table. Then discuss the picture. Another version of this activity is to give someone half of a picture and ask them to find the person with the match. The Safe/Sorry illustrations from the SAFETY book can be used this way.
- **Treasure hunt.** Have numbered clues related to a theme, such as “I’m a place that is often used to store cleaning supplies but that is not safe for children.” (Under the kitchen sink). Each clue leads to another and the group works together to guess each clue’s meaning. The last clue can lead to the “treasure” – something to eat or share and enjoy (bubble bath packets, tea, cookies). Another kind of human treasure hunt can be used as an icebreaker or warm-up. “Find someone who can make perogies,” “Find someone who rides a motorcycle,” “Find someone who took some time for herself today.”

A number of games are described in the section on Warm-ups, pages 153 to 158, including

- Adapted Musical Chairs
- May I?
- Guess Who?
- Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes

The Safe/Sorry game is described on page 166.

Facilitators' tips . . . for games

- Be creative. Make up new games or modify old games.
- Design games with the emphasis on having fun, not on winning or having the “right” answer.
- Do not use the word “game” (as in “*We’re going to play a game now*”).
Some participants, especially younger parents, may react negatively since the activity sounds childish.
- Games can be the Experience part of the experiential learning cycle.



Tools for learning: asking questions

In Nobody's Perfect groups, the kinds of questions the facilitator asks and how he or she asks them creates a feeling of comfort and builds trust in the group which is essential to the learner-centred approach.

Facilitators ask questions for a number of reasons:

- to invite participation
- to encourage and guide discussions
- to facilitate the discovery of new information
- to reach agreement
- to check understanding
- to create opportunities for parents to share their experiences

Different types of questions invite different types of responses.

Closed questions:

When you want to obtain information, ask what is called a closed question. That means that the question can be answered with "yes" or "no," or a very short response.

Have you ever used a thermometer?

How old is your daughter?

Who do you call if you need support?

Open questions:

To stimulate a discussion with a group or an individual, ask what is called an open question. These questions require thoughtful answers and can't be answered with one or two words.

What kinds of things have you thought about doing?

What would you do if. . . ?

What do you feel when you can't get out to see your friends?

What do you do when your son bites his playmates?

What else is happening when your little girl doesn't stay in bed after you've tucked her in?

Broadening questions:

To obtain a wider perspective and become aware of the many components of our experience, ask questions that invite the use of the five senses. These relate to the NOTICE in the experiential learning cycle.

What was happening? What did you notice?
What did you hear? What was said? By whom? Then what was said?
What did you actually see? Who was doing it? What were they doing?
What smells or tastes were you aware of?
When did this begin? Then what happened? When did it happen before?
Where did it happen? Who was there? Who was not there?
Does it always happen this way?
What else did you notice?

Deepening questions:

To take people inside themselves to make a personal meaningful connection, ask questions about feelings or memories. These help with the relating part of the experiential learning cycle. These are the kinds of questions that participants may answer silently. Deepening questions may create anxiety and participants may feel the need to protect themselves.

What feelings does this experience bring up?
What feelings do you become aware of?
What meaning does this have for you?
What memories or other situations does this remind you of?
What do you feel when you can't get out to see your friends?

Facilitators' tips . . . for asking questions

- In a participant-centred approach, it is the responsibility of the facilitator to make the question clear. If the participants are not responding or seem puzzled, you could ask: "*Did I ask that clearly?*"
- Questioning is best done slowly with a measured pace and plenty of pauses to allow for responses from those who like to think an idea through before answering.
- Sometimes facilitators might present an idea to give the participants an opportunity to consider an issue that might not be expressed openly in the group. "*What about the idea that spanking is okay when your child's safety is involved, such as when your two-year-old runs out onto the street?*"

- Probe for answers to your questions by asking for explanations and interpretations. For example:

"Can you give us an example?"

"Tell us more about that."

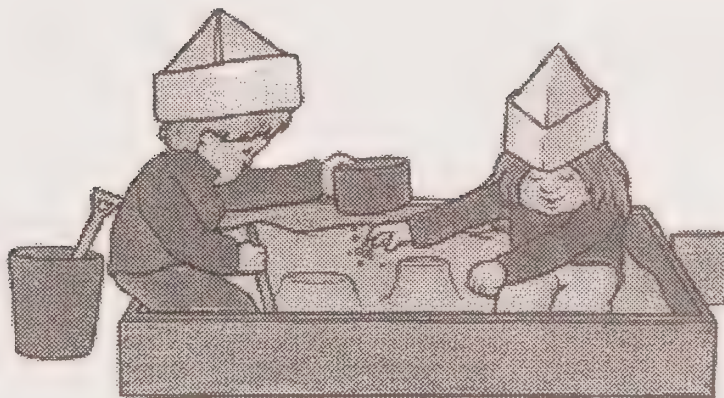
"What do you mean by that?"

"Could you explain that a bit more?"

"Let's take this one a little further."

- Don't ask questions if you already know the answer. Instead, offer the answer in a brief chat or on a handout. Good discussions provide ways for people to explore ideas. They are not for testing whether people know answers.

You'll find more information on asking questions in *Listening Actively* and *Speaking Effectively* in Section 4.



Tools for learning: discussions

A discussion is more than an exchange of ideas and opinions. In discussions, parents learn how to express their opinions and hear other points of view. Parents are able to relate the topic of the discussion to their own lives and their own experience.

Many facilitators have found discussions to be an excellent way for adults to look at many sides or parts of an issue, make a connection to their own life and come away with a new idea or plan. Knowing when and how to facilitate a discussion is important. In the early stages of a group's development, for example, parents may not feel comfortable expressing their opinions in the large group. Small group discussions may be more effective.

When using discussion:

- Set the stage for the discussion and focus on the topic by using a story, an incident or example from something that has already occurred in the group. Conclude with a statement detailing exactly what the focus of the discussion will be. For example:

*"Last week, Mary told us about little Henry finding a sharp knife and having some good whittling practice before she noticed what he was up to. Fortunately, he wasn't hurt and the damage to the furniture was not great! It reminded me of finding my Erika actually toasting pretend toast in our real toaster. How many of you have found your children doing something that you never dreamed they'd do and that you felt was dangerous? Let's begin our topic of Safety by looking at the kitchen and its potential sources of danger. What is there in **your** kitchen that could be dangerous to your children?"*

Check to make sure everyone understands and is interested. A visual teaching aid such as a picture or object can be helpful as a focal point for discussion.

- Stimulate the discussion by asking questions that are non-threatening and address the parents' interests.
- Use concrete examples that the parents can identify with.
- Wait for a response. Give people time to think.
- When someone speaks, make sure that you and everyone else understand what they've said. If necessary, ask a parent to repeat what she has said. Using different words to repeat what the person has said is another way of making sure of the meaning.

- If a group seems slow to participate, ask them to think about their responses to the question for a couple of minutes before they start a discussion. If you still don't get any response, ask if you made yourself clear.
- The trick is to get everyone involved in the discussion without forcing anyone to speak.
- Summarize the main points at the end of a discussion.

Use the experiential learning cycle in your discussion. Asking the three kinds of questions is an effective way to guide a discussion.

- “Notice” questions (*What did you notice?*)
- “Relating” questions (*What do you think about this? What does this mean to you?*)
- “Application” questions (*Having had this experience, become aware of what you and others noticed and the meaning it had for you, what might you see, think about or do differently?*)

A discussion may get bogged down by becoming a conversation between 2 or 3 participants, advice-giving or an attempt to solve an issue for one participant. If this happens, the facilitator's questions will bring the focus back to the topic. It is often useful to go back and ask more **notice** questions.

You can get more suggestions in Section 4 which describes Listening Actively and Speaking Effectively and in the previous section, Asking Questions.

Facilitators' tips . . . for discussions

- Questions that begin with “what” are the most useful. Questions that begin with “why” ask for reasons and tend to lead people away from noticing their feelings and reactions. Also, many people feel defensive when asked “why” questions because they are expected to explain their actions to others.
- Using the experiential learning cycle as a guide leads to thought-provoking and useful discussions.
- The Nobody's Perfect parent books are extremely useful for starting and focusing a discussion.
- Ensure that each participant has the opportunity to give their point of view.
- Use your funny bone – humour goes a long way in ensuring that parents stay involved in discussions.

Tools for learning: playing a part

When playing a part, a person pretends to be someone else in order to experience another person's point of view.

This tool is designed to help people understand their own behaviour or someone else's behaviour. It can be used with a group of any size. When inviting participants to "play a part":

- Describe the situation. For example:

"The situation Brenda is talking about is tricky to understand. Let's take a closer look at it. Brenda, could you pretend to be Willie and show us what he does? Could you pick someone to be you and tell them how you respond to Willie in this situation?"

Remember: The facilitator isn't a casting director. The person bringing the situation or problem to the group needs to get into the shoes of the person they have the problem with and so they always take this part. Let this person choose their fellow performers. *"Who could be you? Who could be your husband (or other people present during the situation)?"*

- Set the stage for the scene or situation being examined.

"Where does this happen?"

"Who else is likely to be there?"

"Who is usually not there?"

"What time of day is it likely to be?"

"What would have happened just before?"

"What do you want to be happening?"

"What is going on for you?"

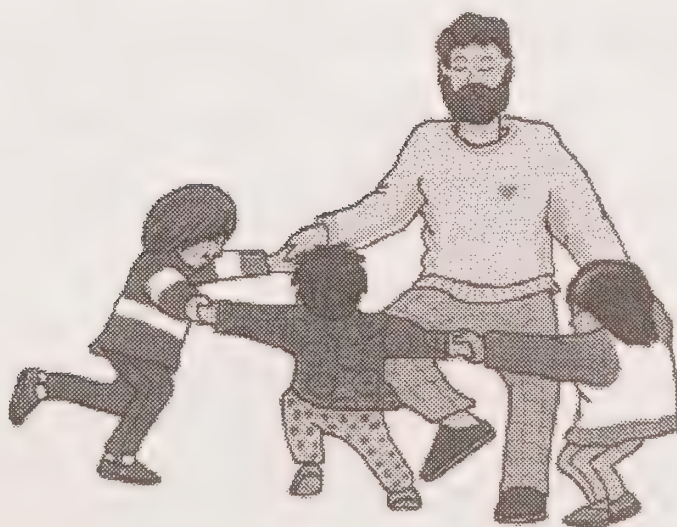
- After watching what happens, have the participants in the drama tell what they noticed, what they experienced and what new meaning they have discovered. This puts the initial focus on the experience and those having the experience. Structure the discussion to reflect the experiential learning cycle: *"What are you noticing?" "What is your understanding now?" "What could you do now?"* Then, ask the people who have been watching to talk about what they noticed and felt.
- The situation can be repeated with the same people in the same roles but playing their parts differently. *"Brenda, now that you've been Willy, what do you see differently from Willy's point of view? What would you like Brenda to do differently?"*

- You can ask the observers what new ideas they have found that apply to their own lives: *"Watching Brenda and Willy may have reminded you about situations you have had recently in your own lives. What new ideas do you see that apply to you personally?"*

Playing a part can be one of the best ways for a group or a person to understand and analyze a particular behaviour. It allows a parent to walk in someone else's shoes and can offer great insight. In addition, it provides a very concrete way to practise a new behaviour. Playing a part can also be a lot of fun!

Facilitators' tips . . . for playing a part

- Playing a part works best in a group where parents have had some time to get to know each other. It's not a good method to use in the first session.
- Introduce this activity by saying, *"Let's take a look at how we might actually act in a situation like this."*
- Playing a part is **always** followed by a discussion with the people playing the parts that focuses on what they noticed, what they understood and what they might do. Generally, it is best to ask the person playing the child to speak first, then the parent, then the other group members.



Tools for learning: an approach to problems

In *Nobody's Perfect*, we do not try to solve problems or give advice. Instead, we teach an approach to problems.

The aim of the problem approach is to give parents a tool they can use to shed new light on sticky problems. At first glance, the approach looks simple. However, it's important to consider a deeper level. When we use the experiential learning cycle (see page 19), we invite parents to uncover new options. The idea of asking oneself questions is used throughout the BEHAVIOUR book and the whole program.

Each one of us is unique, as is each situation. Learning what someone else has done is not always useful. One parent's child may not want to fall asleep because of bad dreams, while another's may lie awake worrying about the fighting that's happening on the other side of the bedroom door.

Thinking about and stating the problem clearly and briefly – *"my child won't stay in bed and fall asleep"* – is the first step to learning about the underlying issue. In *Nobody's Perfect*, we recognize that this is only the first step and we don't offer advice or attempt to solve the problem. Instead, we provide an opportunity for participants to learn an **approach to problems** – a way of looking at and relating to their own problems so that they discover new options for themselves.

This approach to problems follows the experiential learning cycle. The four problem-solving questions found in the BEHAVIOUR book remind us of the steps of this cycle.

Ask the person with the problem to:

- NOTICE What is happening?
- RELATE Why is it happening?
- APPLY What can I do?
- NOTICE What if this doesn't work?

When using this approach to problems, remember: it is not your job to know what someone else should do. It is your job to help the person see what might be missing in the way they look at the issue. We do this by teaching the group members to ask many questions about what the person with the problem has noticed or knows about the situation. The focus is on asking NOTICE questions first so that the person with the problem discovers more and more parts of the situation before moving to how they feel about it. For example:

What time did (does) this happen?
Who is there when it is happening?
Who is not there when it is happening?
What are you doing when this is happening?
When is the first time you noticed this?
What did you do then?

Allow time for thought and reflection between questions. Pay attention to the person's body language and facial expression and watch for signs that they have recognized something new. Resist the natural tendency to leap too quickly from one or two notice questions to a possible solution.

When the parent discovers something new, he or she will begin to consider the new connection, new understanding and new feelings. Wait! At this point, the person will move to the next step by reflecting on their discovery. Allow time to do this without interruption.

They may or may not know what they are going to do next. Let them know that it will come to them soon. Ask, *"Would more questions be helpful or is that enough?"*

Few of us put a new idea into practice perfectly the first time. When we do try a new idea, it becomes the next experience and the process begins again. However, our new way of understanding problems can be a real source of satisfaction which leads to an increase in self-esteem.

Facilitators' tips . . . for approaching problems

- Participants are empowered to consider and understand their own problems.
- Coach group members to focus on NOTICE questions.
- Watch for the Aha! or light of recognition within the person who has the problem.
- A solution may not emerge during this activity. It may come later that day or during the week. If it does not, the critical piece of the puzzle is still missing and the person with the problem may ask for more support.
- Our focus is on helping participants to learn to ask useful questions, not on having a problem solved.

- Facilitators may refer to the Guide as a reminder of the questions they can ask, just as parents may refer to the problem-solving approach in the BEHAVIOUR book.
- When using this approach to problems, remember, it is not our job to tell someone what they should do. It is our job to help the person see their situation in a different light so that they can find their own solution.

Tools for learning: presentations

A presentation is a short talk that provides information or an explanation. Facilitators can use a brief presentation to introduce new topics or to create a transition into another activity. For people who learn best by listening, presentations provide them with facts and ideas.

Because presentations involve little participation by the parents, they are seldom longer than five minutes. Use concrete examples that parents in your group can identify with.

To prepare an effective presentation:

- Keep it short and simple.
- Make a list of the main points and put them in order.
- Summarize the points at the end.
- Encourage the parents to ask questions or discuss what you have said.

Facilitators' tips . . . for presentations

- Briefly share a personal anecdote. It can add interest to a presentation and encourage parents to be open about their own experiences.
- Encourage parents to express their opinion of the content in your presentations.
- A presentation should never stand on its own, but should always lead into something else.

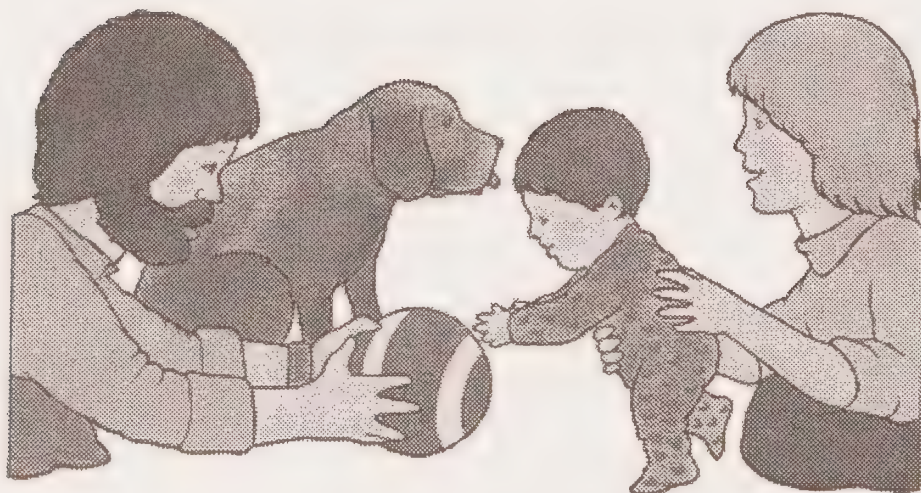
Sample learning activities

The following seven sample learning activities are designed for both group and one-to-one sessions. They have been designed using the tools for creating learning activities described earlier.

No time frames are included here because the time required for each will depend on the needs of the particular group of parents you're working with. As you gain experience as a facilitator, you'll become a good judge of how much time to allow for the activities that you create.

Although each of these sample learning activities focuses on a specific topic from one of the parent books, each approach can be adapted to suit a variety of topics in various books. For example, the activity on time management could be adapted to a session on stress.

Each learning that occurs within the group will offer an opportunity for participants to apply the learning to "real-life" situations. This is a very important step. You can encourage this by asking group members to practise a new skill or use what they have learned at home during the week. They can tell how things went at the beginning of the next session as part of check-in.



Example 1 How to use attention effectively to change behaviour (BEHAVIOUR)

- Objectives**
- to discover when it is appropriate to give acknowledgment and attention
 - to learn how to give acknowledgment and attention

Learning activity

- Experience** Guided Imagery. Ask the parents to think back to a time when they felt really acknowledged for something they had done or a way they had been in a situation that was effective.
Exactly what did you do? Exactly what did the other person do?
What exactly was said? By whom? Was it said to you or to someone else?
- Notice** *What did you feel in your body as you relived this experience?*
What did you notice or become aware of when reliving this experience?
- Relate** *When you consider or mull this over, what meaning has this experience had for you? What do you feel in this type of situation? What meaning does this have for you in your life now? What meaning does this have to you in your situation with your children?*
- Apply** *Having remembered this experience, noticing what you did, discovering the meaning it had for you, what is something you will do now?*
Based on what we have all remembered and the specific effect it had on you, what seems to be important to include in an acknowledgment? For you?
Knowing this about yourself, how could you use this new information with your children?

Example 2 Safety, security and love (MIND)

- Objectives**
- to discover the value or importance of feeling safe, secure and loved
 - to discover what makes people feel safe, secure and loved
 - to create ways to help children feel safe, secure and loved to practise using the MIND book

Learning activity

- Experience** Put out markers, pencils, crayons, paper.
Ask everyone to think of a home. It might be their home, an animal or bird home. Ask them to draw it on a paper. As they are drawing and colouring, move around the room making encouraging comments. *Oh, that looks cozy and comfy. I love those colours, too. What a great feeling in your picture.*
Invite each person to show their picture and say a bit about why they chose to draw that and the way in which it represents home to them. Be appreciative and encouraging. *Wow, I really get the feeling of your picture. I could just curl up in there. What a feeling of safety.*
- Notice** Ask Notice questions. *What did you notice as you were drawing your picture? What were you aware of in the atmosphere in the room? What were you aware of when you looked at other people's pictures? What did you feel when you showed your picture? What comments, either for your picture or others, did you notice?*
- Relate** *When you stop and think about this experience, what does it remind you of? What meaning does it have for you? What feelings do you have about yourself when you allow yourself to be creative? What allowed you to play and have fun or told you to be careful?*

Experience

Ask each participant to get a new sheet of paper. Give the instructions in a no-nonsense tone. *Listen carefully. I am going to tell you what to draw. Please draw exactly what I tell you to. I will give all the instructions and then give them again slowly so you will not miss any details. Draw a house with a front door and three windows. Place a doorknob on the right of the door. Draw a brick chimney. Draw a sidewalk to the front door. Draw a tree and three bushes and a few tulips along the walk. Put two clouds in the sky.* While they are drawing, go around the room and make judgemental comments. *Did I say to put curtains in the windows? Excuse me, am I supposed to know that is a bush? Did I say to make a sidewalk across the front of the house?*

Tell each person to show their picture to the others.

Notice

What did you feel as you were drawing this picture? Were you having fun? Which picture did you enjoy drawing more? What were you aware of when you were showing your picture? What did you notice when others were showing theirs?

Relate

What comments or ideas were you aware of? What did this remind you of? Which situation was more comfortable for you? What made it comfortable? What made the other one less comfortable for you? When you think of this experience you have had and think of your children, what comes to mind?

Apply

What one thing will you do differently based on what you discovered?

Experience

Read together the beginning section in the MIND book or look at pictures and discuss what is happening and how people – parents and children – might be feeling. Ask participants to move into groups based on having children of similar ages. Ask each group to look in the MIND book for things to remember at that specific age.

Example 3 Time management (PARENTS)

- Objectives**
- to understand basic principles of time management
 - to practise setting priorities
 - to value having time for yourself

Learning activity

- Experience** Brainstorm all the ways that parents spend time – for example, making meals, playing with children, cleaning up, relaxing, shopping, sleeping, etc.
- Notice** Agree on a final list of activities.
 Ask each parent to create a pie chart that describes how they spend time during a typical 24-hour period.
 Ask parents to work in pairs.
What did you notice or become aware of when making your chart?
As you look at your chart, what do you learn about the way you spend your time?
What seem to be the most important tasks to you?
What are your priorities?
- Relate** *When you consider and mull over your chart and your life, what options do you become aware of?*
- Experience** Have the parents post their charts and look at each other's for new ideas, or different ways of doing things.
- Notice** *What are some of the things you notice when you look at everyone's charts?*
- Relate** *Having looked at what you and others have been doing, what meaning does this have for you?*
- Apply** *What are two things that you think you will do differently based on what you have discovered today?*
- Experience** Ask parents to make a new chart showing the changes that they would like to make in the way they spend their time.
- Notice** *What do you notice about how you set priorities?*
How do you make time for yourself?

Relate	<i>What are some of the things that happen when you do make time for yourself?</i>
Apply	<i>Based on your experience today, what will you do to make time for yourself?</i>

Example 4 Exploring values

- Objectives**
- to become aware of values around parenting
 - to explore how values influence actions

Learning activity

Experience Introduce the topic by showing a picture or telling a story that illustrates a value and allows each person to connect with their own values. Then say:

Our values guide almost everything we do and every choice we make. Surprisingly, most of us don't really think much about our values at all. Everyone has different values. That doesn't mean that one person is right and another is wrong. It just means that they have different values. Sometimes, we even have conflicting values with in ourselves.

Create a line along the floor with masking tape or string. Call one end of the line Strongly Agree. Call the other Strongly Disagree.

Say, *"Think about what I'm going to say next. Come and find a place on the line that matches how you feel about what I've said. For example, if you strongly agree, stand at that end. If you agree, but not strongly, stand closer to the middle."*

Make several value statements, pausing between them just long enough for parents to find a place on the line and notice where they are standing in relation to everyone else. Examples of statements you could use are:

"I believe that children should enjoy childhood with no demands on them."

"I believe that if I work hard enough, I can keep my children happy all the time."

"I believe that parents should be able to deal with their children the way they want."

"I believe that if I am a good parent, my children will be good."

Notice After the activity, ask participants what they are noticing about their values. Are they the same or different from other parents? For which statements did they know right away where they stood, and for which did they have to think for a while?

Relate Ask what that means to them.

Apply Ask *"With this experience of hearing these statements, finding your place on the line and noticing what comes up for you, what will you see, think about or do differently?"*

Discuss the ways in which values influence the way we parent and the things we expect of ourselves and our children. What values do we want to teach our children through our actions as parents?



Example 5 Health and illness (BODY)

- Objectives**
- to practise using the BODY book
 - to become more aware of the symptoms of illness in their children
 - to feel comfortable about dealing with illness in their children
 - to take a preventive approach with their children's health

Learning activity

Experience Show parents the BODY book and how it is organized into sections on Growth and Illness.

Ask them to leaf through the book. What pictures, ideas, thoughts seem important? Have a general discussion about parents' comments.

Notice Ask parents to work in groups of three to brainstorm how their children act when they are not well. Provide a piece of flip chart paper so that each group can post its list. Facilitate a discussion in which you group these characteristics – for example, changes in the way the child eats. Be sure to acknowledge that each child is unique.

Hand out small file cards (3" X 5"). Ask each parent to list the symptoms that indicate to her or him that a child might be ill. Suggest that parents keep this list at home in a place where they can easily refer to it.

Facilitate a discussion in the group as a whole in which parents develop a list of how their children act when they are well. Do this for each group of characteristics developed during the brainstorming activity that children display when they are ill – for example, eating patterns or sleeping patterns.

Relate Use the yellow section of the BODY book (pp. 6–18) to focus on ways to promote good health.

Apply Do a round, asking each parent to describe one thing she already does that promotes good health and one thing she would like to do differently.

Example 6 Injury prevention (SAFETY)

- Objectives**
- to discover situations and environments dangerous to small children
 - to figure out ways of creating safe environments
 - to practise using the SAFETY book

Learning activity

- Experience** *Everyone knows that parents need to have eyes in the back of their heads. Why is that?*
Brainstorm the safety concerns they have.
Ask each person to get down to eye level with their child – lying, creeping, crawling or walking. Have them move about the room the way their child would.
- Notice** *What did you see? Hear? Notice? Find interesting? Find irresistible?*
What did you do? What did you want to do?
What questions or ideas popped into your mind?
What were you aware of in the actions of the others?
What contact did you make with them?
What do you notice about your child in his or her environment?
- Experience** *Guided Imagery. At the level of your child – rolling, creeping, lying or walking – imagine yourself moving through your home starting at the doorway, moving into the first room, seeing it from the middle, and imagining moving around the edges.*
What attracts your attention? What do you want to see closely, touch, move?
Move into the next room, and so on.
- Notice** *What do you become aware of? What is fascinating in your home?*
- Relate** *When you reflect on this experience and think of your home and your child, what do you discover? What does it mean to you?*
- Apply** *Based on this experience, what will you do/change when you go home?*

- Experience** SAFETY Book. Divide parents into pairs or groups of three. Ask each group to choose one or two sections of the SAFETY book from the colour list of contents. Have them look at how this book could be useful to a parent at home.
- Notice** *What would parents need to know from your section?*
Have each group report back.
- Relate** *When you take a minute to think about this book and its contents, what meaning does it have for you? What experiences have you had around safety issues? Would the information in this book have been useful?*
What information is new to you?
What information do you feel good about already knowing?
- Apply** *What are two things you will look at differently in your home/car/playground? What will you do differently?*
What will you do with this book?

Example 7 Tools for guiding behaviour

- Objectives**
- to explore strategies to influence children's behaviour
 - to practise using different tools and to reflect on that experience

Learning activity

- Experience** Make large, laminated cut-outs of carpentry tools such as a hammer, screwdriver, saw, wrench and pliers with key words on them that refer to strategies for encouraging positive behaviours, such as "ignoring behaviour," "good example," "hugs," "attention," "understand what's happening," "telling," "rules," "consequences," "change activities," "change surroundings," etc.

Choose one of the tools and ask the parents to suggest a situation where that tool might be useful. For example, if the tool is "listening," it would be useful to use when a child is upset about not getting his way.

Brainstorm some examples of children's misbehaviour and have a discussion about which tool might be useful. Practise using it, if possible.

Notice	<i>Ask, What are you noticing about using this tool in this situation?</i>
	<i>After practising a few tools with different situations, ask, Which tool really stood out for you?</i>
Relate	<i>Now that you have talked about and practised using different tools and you have noticed which one stood out for you, what meaning does it have in your own life?</i>
Apply	<i>What is one thing that you will see, think about or do differently?</i>

Sample opening activities

Opening activities can include icebreakers, name games and warm-ups.

Facilitators use icebreakers when a group of people is getting together for the first time and most of the people don't know each other. Name games are also used in this situation, but after the icebreaker has helped participants relax a bit. Warm-ups are usually used at the start of the remaining sessions of the program or after a break.

Because openings are important in setting the tone of your sessions, we've included samples to get you started and give you some ideas. These have been used successfully by other Nobody's Perfect facilitators. As you gain experience as a facilitator, keep a file of the new or helpful activities you discover.

Facilitators' tips . . . for opening activities

- Plan your opening activities carefully. Write down specific details of what you will do and when you'll do it.
- Don't use opening activities that make you feel uncomfortable. If you're not having fun, your group won't have fun either.
- Choose icebreakers and warm-ups that build on the strengths of the participants. Avoid those that highlight their weaknesses. For example, an activity that requires writing will not help parents with low literacy skills. However, they may respond to drawing a picture or be good storytellers.

Planning icebreakers, name games and warm-ups

Icebreakers

It can be an uncomfortable experience to come to a group where you are a stranger, or know only a few of the other participants.

- You might wonder what to expect.
- You might look around for someone who seems friendly or looks like he or she might have something in common with you.
- You might feel shy about speaking in front of a group of strangers.
- You might feel cautious about what you want to tell these people about yourself or your children.
- You might feel worried about what it means to be in this group and what these people might know about you.

In this situation, what would help you to feel more comfortable? What would make you feel welcome and connected with the other people in the group?

Icebreakers are experiences that provide an opportunity for participants in a newly formed group to begin to feel comfortable and connected. They should be fun and should not single anyone out or require individuals to speak alone in front of the group.

An icebreaker is the first activity your group will do together. Early in the first session, right after everyone introduces themselves, you could begin the icebreaker by saying something like, “Let’s get to know each other by (describe the activity briefly).” Don’t call what you’re doing an “icebreaker” Most people don’t know what it means, and the word “icebreaker” can sound harsh.

An effective icebreaker does several things:

1. It takes the characteristics of the group into account.

What do you know about your group? Are they very young? Are they of a specific culture? Do they already know each other outside the group? Are they strangers to one another?

When choosing an icebreaker, consider whatever information you have about your participants and respect their dignity. What’s fun for one group might seem silly or embarrassing to another. For example:

- If your group is very young, plan a way for them to talk to each other about something you know they will be interested in – popular music, recent movies, TV shows, sports, etc.
- If your group shares a specific cultural or ethnic background, be sure that any activities you plan honour their cultural beliefs and practices.

2. It gets people moving and gives them a specific topic to talk about.

An effective icebreaker has two characteristics: it gives people a topic to discuss and it requires that they move around. There are many ways to do this:

- Find the person whose child is closest in age to yours.
- Find someone who has moved the same number of times you have.
- Find someone who has a question about what they're doing here.
- Find someone who walked here.
- Find someone who grew up in a family with the same number of children as you did.
- Find someone who was born in this community.
- Find someone who likes Mel Gibson.
- Find everyone who is a fan of your favourite musical group.
- Find everyone who has seen (whatever movie people are talking about).
- Find someone whose favourite TV show is the same as yours.

3. It allows time for participants to chat.

Allow plenty of time for people to talk. It can take a while for participants to start to relax and connect with one another and this is the point of the exercise.

People need at least 30 minutes to begin to feel at home. You may need to use several icebreakers to keep people talking and moving around for this length of time.

4. It is stress-free for the facilitator(s).

It is important to choose an icebreaker that will be relaxing and fun for you as well as for the parents.

Sample icebreakers

Interview and introduction

- Ask parents to work in pairs and interview each other, using questions such as:
 - ◆ What's your name?
 - ◆ How many children do you have?
 - ◆ What are their names?
 - ◆ How old are they?
 - ◆ Imagine that you have unexpectedly won a free evening out and \$100. What would you do?

- This isn't a memory test. Interviewers can write things down if they like.
- Have each parent introduce the person they interviewed.
For example:
"I'd like to introduce Maria. She has three children: José, who's five; Louisa, who's three; and Diego who's only six months old. On her evening out, she'd buy a new outfit and go dancing!"

Find me!

(Use only if the literacy levels of the group allow it.)

- Give each parent a slip of paper.
- Ask them to write:
 - ♦ Two things you can't tell by looking at me.
 - ♦ If I had three hours to myself, I would:
- Put all the papers in a hat.
- Have each person choose a paper and find the person who wrote it.



Bingo

- Make “bingo” cards before the session. You can make up questions based on what you know about the group from your initial interview.

Your favourites		Name of someone else who likes the same thing	Initials
Favourite season			
Favourite colour			
Favourite TV show			
Favourite food			
Favourite movie			
Favourite thing to do			

- Have each parent take a card and list their favourite things.
- Ask the parents to find someone who shares one of their favourite things and sign their name in the box next to it.
- Keep going until all the boxes are filled.
- Instead of using favourites, you can use other kinds of criteria – for example, someone who has the same number of children as you; some one under 21; someone with more than two piercings; someone who has seen a particular movie or TV show; someone who has gone swimming this year, etc.

My ideal

- Ask parents to go around the circle and give their names and their children's names.
- Divide parents into smaller groups of three. Give each group a piece of flip chart paper with the letters PARENT written down the left side. Ask group members to write down all the words and short phrases they can think of that begin with each letter and relate to what parenting is all about for them. For example:

P *practical, potty, pretty, pushy kids, Penaten, problems*

A *arguments, agreeing*

R

E

N

T

- Each group posts its list and parents look at each others' results. You can then make connections between what parents have written down and what the program is about.

Common ground

- Give a large piece of paper to each small group of three or four parents.
- Ask them to write a list of any 10 things that they have in common – for example, likes or dislikes, numbers or ages of children, where they were born and so on.
- Whenever participants discover something that applies only to themselves ("*Has everyone gone bungee jumping?*" "*Does anyone else like parsnips?*"), they write it on one of the corners of the page.
- In addition to learning many things that they have in common as a group, the participants will also know several things that apply only to them as individuals.

Name games

Name games are a bit different from icebreakers. Icebreakers get people moving around and feeling relaxed. Name games help them learn one another's names. Name games are effective after participants have had some fun together, are feeling more relaxed and may be more interested in knowing each other's names.

Sample name games

Tell-tale initials

- Ask parents to think of a word they like that starts with the same letter as their first name.
- Have them introduce themselves using these words to describe themselves.

For example:

- ♦ Theresa Sanders: *"I'm terrific Theresa."*
- ♦ Joe Leblanc: *"I'm jolly Joe."*

Picnic basket

- Ask parents to pretend they're going on a picnic.
- Ask parents to introduce themselves and name a kind of food they'll bring to the picnic. Their food must start with the same letter as their name.
- As the parents introduce themselves, they say their name and food and the names and foods of the parents who went before them.

For example:

"I'm Evelyn and I'm bringing eggs."
"I'm Chandra and I'm bringing chapatis. Evelyn is bringing eggs."
"I'm Thomas and I'm bringing tea. Evelyn's bringing eggs and Chandra's bringing chapatis."

- Encourage parents to help each other if they lose their place or forget someone's name or food.

Make your own name tag

- Materials:
 - ◆ Index cards with holes punched in two corners and a parent's name printed on each
 - ◆ Lengths of coloured yarn
 - ◆ Craft materials – stickers, markers, scissors, glue, old magazines, stamps and ink pads
- Have parents sit at a table with craft materials at hand.
- Give each parent his or her name tag and lengths of yarn.
- Ask each parent to use the craft materials to decorate a name tag so that it tells something about them. For example, they could stick on a star for each child, or paste on pictures of animals they like, or use a favourite colour. The facilitator should join them and make a name tag as well.
- Have parents thread the yarn through the holes, tie a knot and wear it around their neck.
- Ask the parents to introduce themselves using the designs on their name tag.
- Collect the name tags at the end of the session and give them out again at each of the remaining sessions.

Children can do a similar activity in child care.

Warm-ups

Warm-ups – also known as energizers – can be used to introduce a session, to get people back into the group after a break and to create energy. They can be a powerful way to bring people together and move them from their daily lives into the group.

The purpose of a warm-up is to:

- help parents to move mentally from their everyday lives into the session
- encourage parents to express their interests as they develop throughout the program
- create a comfortable atmosphere for learning
- provide an opportunity for participants to find out more about each other

Warm-ups should be about 15 minutes long. The length depends on the size of your group and how comfortable group members are with you and with each other. From the warm-up, the group should move smoothly into the first planned activity.

Warm-ups should be lots of fun, thought provoking, give adults the experience of playing and give them ideas for things they can do with their children. Many adults do not play or have much fun, on their own or with their children. For some, playing is not encouraged in their culture. Others are afraid they'll look silly.

The essential parts of a good warm-up are:

- Lots of movement
- Fun – lots of laughter

Children's games can be effective warm-ups, although they sometimes need to be altered to focus more on cooperation and less on who's the biggest, fastest or strongest. (Many children's games are based on a "survival of the fittest" approach.)

Sample warm-ups

Adapted musical chairs

- Make a circle of chairs, with the chairs turned inward so parents face one another across the circle. Use one less chair than the number of participants. Place the last chair in the middle of the circle.
- The person in the middle calls out something that is true of her and hopefully others in the group – for example, "*Anyone with two children?*" Everyone for whom that is true – including the person in the centre – runs across the circle to a different chair. Anyone for whom the question doesn't apply, just stays in the chair and watches everyone scramble.
- The person without a chair on the outer circle takes the centre chair and calls the next issue – "*Anyone who walked here today?*" And so on.
- This activity can last as long as 15 minutes. Stop it while the energy is still high.

May I?

- All but one person stands in a line.
- The person who has volunteered to begin stands at a distance. That person calls out to each person in turn the number, kind (scissor step, umbrella step, baby step, giant step) and direction (forward, backward, sideways) of steps he or she must take. For example, "*George, you may take two baby steps sideways.*" George must respond "May I?"
- The volunteer "caller" then gives permission or change the instructions. For example, "*No, you may not. You may take three scissor steps forward*" or "Yes, you may." The idea is to be the first person to reach the place where the caller is standing.
- If a player forgets to say "May I?", he or she loses a turn.
- "May I?" can be used before an activity about play, manners, how we like to be spoken to, or play at different ages.

Wake the dead

- All but one participant lies on the floor in a circle, with their feet near each other and their heads out at the circumference. They lie stiffly, with their eyes closed.
- The "grave yard attendant" goes to one person and without touching, tries to make them laugh.
- If they laugh, they join with the graveyard attendant and try to make another person laugh.
- This continues until everyone is up.
- This may be used before an activity about keeping our cool, getting out of reactive mode, deciding what we will respond to, stress releasers, the power of laughter.

Human puzzle

- All but one person join hands in a circle while the person outside the circle turns his or her back.
- The circle members twist and turn, climbing over and going under arms and legs while still holding hands until everyone is in a tight knot.
- The person outside the circle then attempts to "untie" the knot and get the group back to the original circle without anyone letting go of the hands they're holding.

Memory basket

- In a wide, shallow basket, place a number of small objects that might evoke childhood memories – for example, a penknife, a little doll, a small book, a coin, a spool of fishing line, matches, a crayon, chalk, a camera, a small shovel, a measuring cup, a toy car, embroidery thread, a train engine. Have more objects than the number of participants in the group.
- Ask the parents to pass the basket around and choose one object that reminds them of something from their childhood.
- When everyone has chosen something, ask them to tell why they chose that object.

Favourite toy

- With everyone seated in a circle, ask, “What was your favourite toy as a child?”
- Give everyone time to talk about their favourite toy and the memories associated with it.

Guess who?

- Pass out small index cards or slips of paper. Ask participants to write four things about themselves that the group doesn’t know.
- Collect the cards and read them out loud.
- People guess who the card is from.

A variation on this game is that everyone writes down two things that are true that no one would know about them and one thing that is false. When each person reads the list out loud, the others try to guess which item is false. This can be lots of fun and gives people permission to tell about interesting or outrageous things they’ve done as well as to make up something they might wish they’d done. This game also reminds them that exaggerating or telling something that isn’t true can be fun, so they have more understanding when children tell lies.

Singing with actions

Row, Row, Row Your Boat

- Have parents sing along with “*Row, Row, Row Your Boat*” while making whatever hand motions they think will indicate rowing, merriment and dreaming.
- Have them sing it as a round so different people are singing different parts and making different hand motions.
- This is a highly spiritual song about the river of life. It may be used before to looking at how to be gentle with ourselves and others or when considering the whirlpools of life.

Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes (to the tune of London Bridges Falling Down)

- Ask participants to sing along with the lyrics:

*Head and shoulders, knees and toes,
Knees and toes, knees and toes
Head and shoulders, knees and toes,
Eyes, ears, mouth and nose.*

- Have them touch each body part as they sing the song.
- Repeat the lyrics faster and faster until everyone is breathless, laughing and can no longer keep up.
- Can be used before discussing issues and ideas about the Body.

Sample energizers

Energizers are very quick activities used to recharge, energize or change the energy in the group.

In and out, up and down

- Everyone stands in a circle with their arms at their sides.
- While breathing in, everyone stretches out their arms and raises them above their head.
- Then lower arms while breathing out.
- Repeat three times, breathing loudly and vigorously.

- Each person turns toward the person on their left.
- While breathing in, straighten arms out to the side and raise them to shoulder level.
- Lower arms with the outward breath.
- Repeat three times.

Human machine

- Everyone stands in a circle.
- One person goes into the centre and begins a motion that could be made by a machine.
- Everyone adds on, each doing a different motion and/or making a different machine type noise.
- At the command “CHANGE” each person does a new motion.

Be a windmill, grind the grain

- Stand in a circle, with sufficient room to move arms freely.
- With arms extended and hands clasped, swing the arms in a wide vertical circle to create wind like a windmill.
- After 10 or so sweeps, change the motion to a horizontal circle to grind the grain.

Thumper

- Ask everyone to take their shoes off.
- Everyone starts stamping their feet faster and faster.

Tarzan

- Have everyone stand up, thump their chests and yell like Tarzan.

Sock hop

- Play 50's Rock'n Roll music and dance around the room.

Sample monitoring activities

Monitoring is done at the end of each session. It's a quick way to check on how the group is progressing, how participants are feeling and what they're getting from the group.

Sample monitoring activities

Weather report

- Ask participants to report their feelings as a weather report. For example:
 - ◆ “cloudy with brief sunny breaks”
 - ◆ “warm, with occasional foggy patches”

Describe yourself

- Choose one of these and ask participants to describe themselves as:
 - ◆ a piece of furniture
 - ◆ a song
 - ◆ a musical instrument
 - ◆ an animal

Tell us . . .

- This activity can be done verbally or be written and then read aloud.
- Tell us . . .
 - ◆ one thing you noticed today
 - ◆ what understanding you got from it
 - ◆ one thing you will do differently in the coming week

Group portrait

- This can be used at about the half-way point in a program to check on group process, how participants feel in relation to the group.
- Draw a big picture frame on a flip chart.
- Provide coloured markers and ask parents to take turns drawing themselves into the picture.
- You can ask parents to say something about the colour they choose and the place they put themselves in the picture.

Using Nobody's Perfect materials

The Nobody's Perfect resource materials are an excellent focal point for your sessions and contain the information that is at the heart of Nobody's Perfect. The materials which all participants receive in the Parent Kit – the five books, the two growth and development charts and the phone sticker – can be particularly useful.

Ways to use the parent books

Because the Nobody's Perfect books form the core of the program, parents need to use and handle them during the sessions.

The more practice parents have with the books during sessions, the more comfortable they feel using them on their own at home.

Facilitator

The Nobody's Perfect parent books have been written in consultation with parents, experts and professionals in the fields of child health, development and safety. They were revised in 1997 and contain the most accurate and up-to-date information available.

The books have been designed to be fun and easy to read and use. They have been developed to make the information they contain appealing and accessible to parents with a range of literacy levels and a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

The books have been written and designed to convey information on several levels:

- **Illustrations:** The illustrations in Nobody's Perfect are colourful, fun and full of little details that attract the eye and focus attention. In addition to being fun to look at, the pictures also communicate messages. Great care has been taken to ensure that all of the information they show is accurate – for example, when a high chair is shown, it meets safety standards. All of the activities pictured in the illustrations are safe. All of the children are shown doing things that are appropriate for their age.

This meticulous attention to detail makes the Nobody's Perfect books usable by parents with low literacy skills. It allows these parents to gather information from the illustrations alone, even if they cannot read the text.

As well, care has been taken to represent parents and children from many ethnic groups in the illustrations, as well as children and adults with physical challenges, enabling a wide range of children and parents to “see themselves” in the Nobody’s Perfect books.

- **Colours** are also used to communicate. Looking at the Contents page in each book, you will see that each block of colour represents a group of subjects (or sometimes, age groups). There is a strip of colour at the top of every page which corresponds to the same block of colour on the Contents page. This makes subjects easier to find.
- **Boldface text:** Headings and important messages are shown in darker print on most pages. Often, key points are placed at the bottom of the page. This enables readers to find important information quickly and allows parents who are uncomfortable with reading to pick up a good bit of information by skimming the text and reading only the boldface print.
- **Text:** The text contains the complete message and expands on the ideas in the illustrations and boldface print. Parents who are comfortable with reading can read the entire book or skip to the sections that interest them. Each topic has been covered in one or two pages and written as clearly and simply as possible.

This approach offers several options for using the books with parents and encouraging parents to use the books on their own at home. Facilitators can:

Focus on the pictures

- You can compare pictures – for example, the SAFE/SORRY system in SAFETY.
- You can ask a parent what a particular picture says to her – for example, the illustration of stress in PARENTS, p. 22.
- You can ask parents whether they agree with the idea behind a particular picture – for example, the illustration in the section on sex play, in BEHAVIOUR, p. 43.

Work from the blocks and strips of colour

- You can ask parents to choose a subject within a particular colour block on the Contents page – for example, choose a topic from the pink block on First Aid in SAFETY.
- You can ask a parent to choose the colour block that interests her the most – for example, the mauve block in MIND talks about two- to three-year olds.

Use, or ask the parent to read, the messages in darker print

- You can use the message in the darker print as a discussion starter – for example, “It is better to childproof than to keep saying “No.” – p. 14, BEHAVIOUR. Do parents agree?

Discuss the ideas, facts or advice on a page

- You can invite the parents to ask questions, and then look for answers together in the NOBODY'S PERFECT books.
- You can suggest a topic taken from a particular book and ask parents if they agree with what the book says.
- You can ask parents if they have ever called a “time out” when things were getting out of hand (BEHAVIOUR, p. 18). Or you can ask if they would like to learn a way to handle problems (problem-solving method used throughout BEHAVIOUR).
- You can ask parents what they think about a particular topic. How do they feel, for example, about pink for girls, blue for boys? (p. 33, MIND) Do they turn off some television programs – which ones? (p. 33, MIND)
- You can ask parents what a particular word means to them, such as mind, behaviour, praise, play, etc.



Ways to use the growth and development charts

The infant development chart: birth–24 months

This chart shows some of the activities that mark a typical baby's development. The chart is only a guide. Parents who are concerned about the development of their children should see a health professional.

There are seven vertical columns. Each represents an age period.

There are four pictures in each column. Each picture is marked with a different colour and indicates a different type of activity.

- Blue/Moving: Gross motor skill development
- Pink/Holding: Fine motor skill development
- Yellow/Seeing: Visual skill development
- Green/Hearing and Speaking: Auditory and verbal skill development

This chart can be used:

- to start a discussion on the normal physical or mental development of a child
- as a lead-in to a discussion of what can be expected of a child at a certain age and the importance of having realistic expectations about how a child should behave
- to begin a discussion on play and/or childproofing by asking parents to find all the things their children can do

The growth chart: 2–5 years

This chart indicates height ranges for the 2-, 3-, 4- and 5-year-old.

There are four colour strips, each representing an age group and a height range.

- Pink: 2 years
- Blue: 3 years
- Yellow: 4 years
- Green: 5 years

The illustrations above and below each colour strip show various skills and activities that indicate healthy development for a child in that age range. The scribbles or drawings at the top of each column correspond to the kind of art work that a child in that age group might produce.

Skills and activities shown on the Growth Chart are:

2 Years Old

- builds a tower of six or seven blocks
- likes pictures, can turn pages one at a time
- threads rings onto a stick
- draws in scribbles, lines, circles, curves

3 Years Old

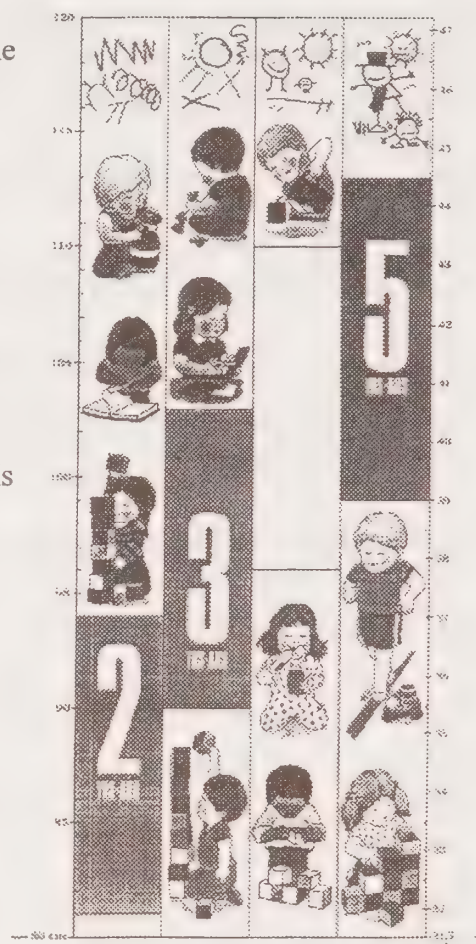
- builds a tower of nine blocks
- cuts with scissors
- does puzzles with big pieces
- begins to draw shapes: circles, squares, Xs

4 Years Old

- builds bridges with blocks
- brushes teeth
- draws shapes that look like people
- can pour

5 Years Old

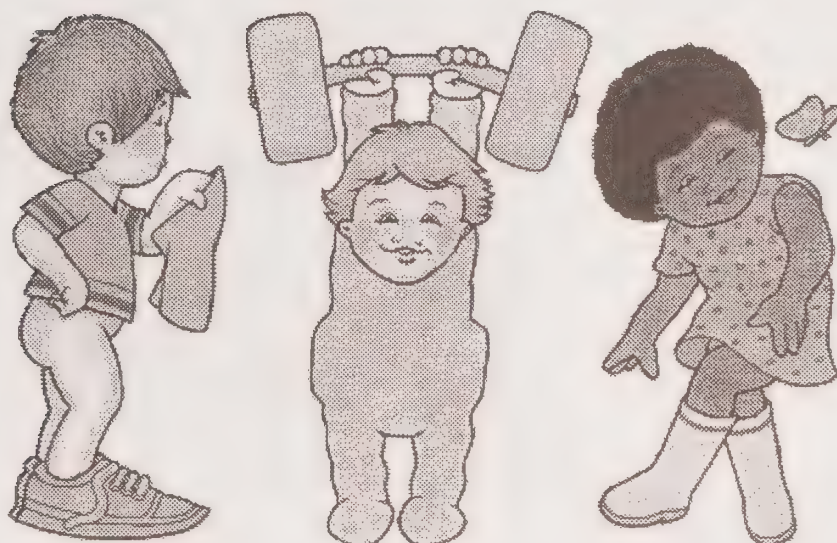
- builds steps with blocks
- can walk a narrow line
- puts detail in pictures



This chart is designed to be taped to a wall. The directions at the bottom of the chart explain how to hang it correctly.

The Growth Chart can be used:

- to start a discussion on the physical or mental development of a child
- to show how each child is different (see BODY, p. 5) – children the same age can be different heights and still be healthy and normal
- to start a discussion on the importance of play in developing children's minds and bodies. (All of the illustrations show children having fun. Play is a child's work.)



The sticker for emergency telephone numbers

This sticker is designed to be placed on or near the telephone.

Nobody's Perfect evaluations have found that the best way to ensure that parents use the stickers is to make filling in the numbers an activity during one of your sessions. You will probably need a telephone book to do this.

Nobody's Perfect

Emergency Numbers

Doctor: _____

Hospital: _____

Poison Control: _____

Ambulance: _____

Police: _____

Fire Dept.: _____

Neighbour: _____

Relative: _____

Work: Father: _____

Mother: _____

The invitation card for parents

The invitation card was developed as a recruitment tool to remind parents when and where the first session will be held. It was designed to resemble an invitation to a party, to help reinforce the feeling that the sessions would be fun.

It also has space for a parent to jot down anything he or she might want to talk about during the program.

The Nobody's Perfect Game: Safe/Sorry

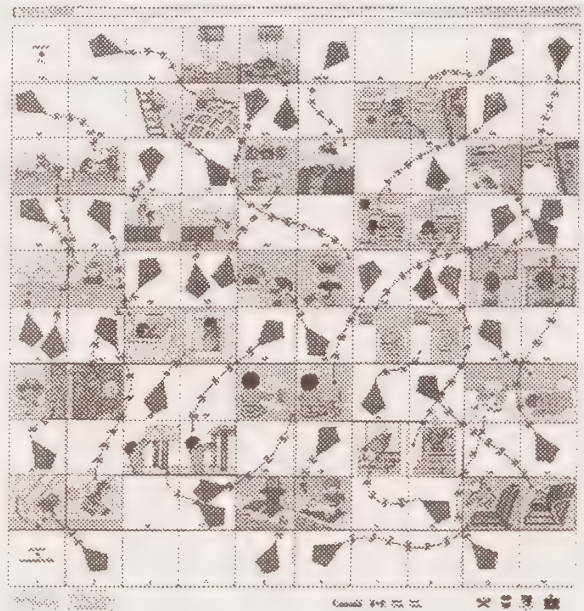
The Safe/Sorry Game is based on Snakes and Ladders, a game many parents are familiar with. It is intended for parents and older children and requires dice (to roll) and coins or buttons (to use as game pieces).

Most parents will be familiar with how to play Snakes and Ladders, so Safe/Sorry will be easy for most. However, when you give the game to parents, it's still good to explain how to play:

- Each player has a different coin or button to mark her square.
- Players take turns throwing the dice to know how many squares to move.
- If the player lands on a Safe square, she flies up the kite to a new square. If the player lands on a Sorry square, she falls down with the kite tail to another square.
- The first player to land on the Finish square wins the game.

NOTE: If you don't have dice, put numbers 1–12 on small pieces of paper. Players draw numbers out of a hat.

Each pair of illustrations contains a safety message, based on the safe/sorry system used throughout the SAFETY book. As the parents play the game, you can ask the parents to talk about the message behind each picture.



Nobody's Perfect materials for parents of infants

Like all parents, parents of infants tend to be interested in the specific needs of their child. Although Nobody's Perfect is intended for parents of children from birth to age five, there is a good bit of information on infants spread throughout the books and parent materials. For example, the Infant Development Chart covers birth to 24 months.

Sections in each of the Nobody's Perfect books relate to infants:

BEHAVIOUR



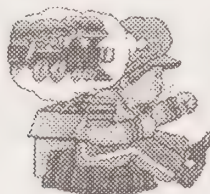
page 8: Normal behaviour for babies
page 13: Make it easier to behave
page 31: Clinging
page 32: Crying
page 37: Jealousy (new babies)

BODY



pages 4–5: Healthy growth
page 9: Smoke-free home
page 10: Sleep
page 11: Cleanliness
page 12: Check-ups
page 13: Immunization
page 14: Teeth
page 16: Feeding babies
page 19: How can I tell if they're sick?
page 27: Colic
page 28: Constipation
page 30: Croup
page 31: Diaper rash
page 32–33: Diarrhea
page 34: Earache
page 35: Fever
page 40: Sore throat
page 41: Vomiting

MIND



pages 7-12: Development from birth to 1 year

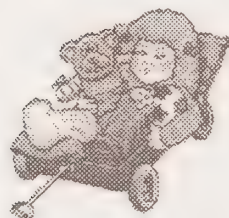
PARENTS



This book concerns all parents, but the following pages would be of particular interest to parents with a baby:

page 4: Parents are people
page 5: Make time for yourself
page 22–23: Stress/Handling stress
page 24–25: Anger/Handling anger
page 27: Depression
page 28: Help!
page 33–34: Getting together
page 35–41: Child care
page 42–43: Abuse
page 46: What should I do if I think I might hurt my child?

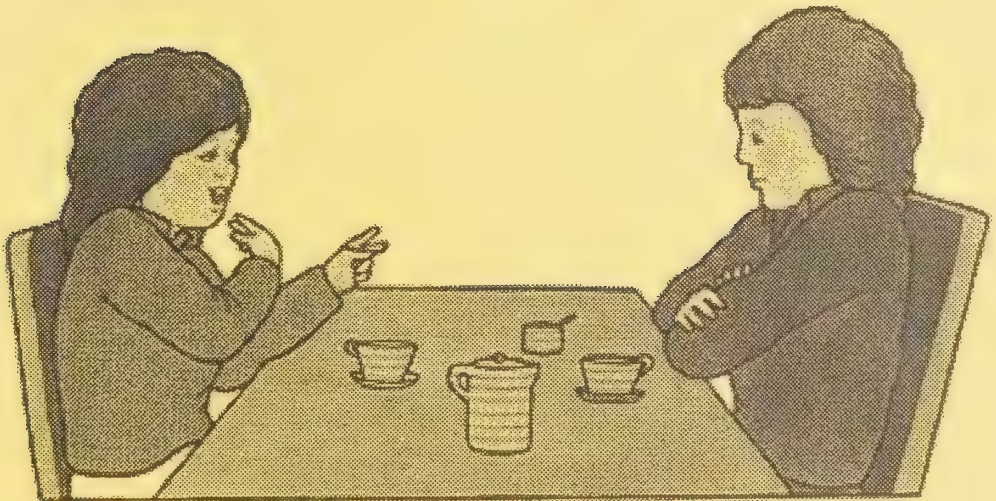
SAFETY



page 11: Keeping kids safe
page 12: SIDS
page 13–15: New skills, birth to 1 year
page 22–23: Children's furniture (mostly for babies)
page 25–26: Toy safety (all ages)
page 27: Infant car seats
page 34: Sun safety
page 45–46: Choking (infants)
page 58: Rescue breathing (baby)

Section 10

Using Nobody's Perfect in one-on-one sessions



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Using Nobody's Perfect in one-on-one sessions

When one-on-one sessions are effective

The Nobody's Perfect program is most commonly offered to a group of parents, which is a format that encourages parents to support one another and develop networks that will continue this support after the program has ended.

However, there are times when group sessions aren't feasible or when a particular parent is unable to participate in a group. In these cases, Nobody's Perfect can be offered on a one-on-one basis. Facilitators may sometimes work one-on-one with a parent until that parent is ready to become part of a group.

Even though you are working with only one parent, your program, sessions and activities should reflect the experiential learning cycle in the same way that they would if you were working with a group. Each activity, each session and the program as a whole should offer the parent experiences and the opportunity to notice, understand and apply what he or she learns.

One-on-one sessions may be necessary:

- For parents who require more personal contact.

"I found the mothers more open in one-on-one situations; we discussed more personal and intimate things."

Facilitator

- **For parents who are too uncomfortable to come to a group.** One-on-one facilitation does not lend itself well to the encouragement of mutual support unless the facilitator is able to provide an opportunity for the one-on-one sessions to gradually expand into group sessions. Facilitators have had considerable success working with a parent in one-on-one sessions until the parent felt comfortable joining a group.

"I remember working with a young mom one-on-one. She was very shy and not ready to participate in a group. After two one-on-one sessions, she was ready to have another parent join us in a couple of sessions. When a group started a week later, they came to the group sessions together."

"You can assess the needs of the individual and may find the obstacles that need to be overcome may best be addressed by doing the one-on-one first until they feel a bit better and then inviting them to the next group series . . . "

Facilitator

- **For couples.**

"Working with a couple . . . gives couples who can't make the group the opportunity to learn together. I have had great success with this process . . . Deep sharing and family issues come out and can be dealt with better than in a group."

Facilitator

- **For introducing Nobody's Perfect into a community** where group participation is a new or unfamiliar concept.

"We couldn't get anyone to come into a group so we used the one-on-one approach to get them interested. Eventually, we formed a group and it worked out beautifully."

Facilitator

"In our community, there is no tradition for people talking about things like parenting in groups; they're just not interested in talking to other people about these things. There's also a lot of myths related to parenting, so we felt that one-on-one was the only way to go initially."

Facilitator

The one-on-one approach can create some challenges for facilitators:

- **It is difficult to facilitate mutual support among parents**, one of the goals of the program. When working with a parent one-on-one, facilitators need to consciously take steps toward the goal of helping the parent become more comfortable in a group and more able to take advantage of the mutual support and sharing a group can offer.

"We have a family resource centre that has drop-in play once a week and it is often a safe entrance for people who are shy about groups. I encourage them to come and will attend with them if requested."

Facilitator

- **One-on-one sessions can be time consuming** for facilitators who already have a full schedule.
- **Parents can feel singled out and find the attention embarrassing.** When the facilitator is a professional – for example, a public health nurse – the parent may feel stigmatized by having so many visits. In addition, some parents find it uncomfortable to be the focus of the facilitator's undivided attention.
- **Privacy may be hard to come by in some homes.** For example, a parent may not wish to have a partner or other family member present during the sessions, but might find it difficult to exclude that person if the sessions take place at home. During the recruiting process, you could explore the need for a quieter or more private location.
- **Child care may be a problem.** Parents may not see the need for formal child care if the sessions are in their own home, and unsupervised children can be very distracting.

- **Parents may develop a dependent relationship on the facilitator.** Parents may become less resourceful if they regard the facilitator as an expert on parenting and become dependent on her for solutions or initiatives.

One good way to become familiar with the challenges and opportunities involved in delivering the one-on-one sessions is to spend time discussing this subject with your sponsoring organization. This can help you to anticipate what might happen and develop strategies for taking advantage of the opportunities that this approach offers you as a facilitator. Keep in mind that a major goal of one-on-one sessions is to enable the parent to participate in a group.

Planning a one-on-one program

Parents who will be participating in Nobody's Perfect through one-on-one sessions need the same kinds of information as parents participating in a group.

Scheduling

One-on-one sessions are often shorter than group sessions simply because there is only one participant and therefore less time is needed.

If you are meeting in the parent's home, think about the best time to get together – perhaps when the children are having a nap.

"Sometimes it's the little things that can make for a good session. Like knowing that you should never make an appointment for a meeting when the soaps are on TV. You only have to do that once to learn your lesson."

Facilitator

Meeting place

Most parents in one-on-one sessions will prefer to meet you in their own homes. However, some parents who are living with their parents or other members of their extended family may prefer to meet you somewhere else. Be prepared with a suggestion for another location in situations like these – for example, a community hall or an office. It should be a place where the parent feels comfortable and relaxed.

Child care

If you are meeting a parent in a one-on-one situation at home, it is a good idea to ask how the children will be cared for during the sessions. It is very difficult to have a good discussion if a parent needs to care for children at the same time. Perhaps you could arrange to meet during nap time, or another family member or friend could look after the children while you are there.

Planning a one-on-one session

Opening a session

In one-on-one situations, focus on starting sessions in a relaxed and informal way. You can do this by inquiring about family members or following up on subjects discussed last time. You could also make a bridge between two sessions – for example, *“What were you able to try with the problem-solving method during the week? How about if we start today by talking about that?”* Maintain a casual and conversational tone, giving the parent enough time to think about answers to your questions.

Session topics

As is the case in group sessions, the topics you cover will be based on the parent's interests and concerns. Work with the parent to be sure the sessions meet her needs.

Flexibility is as important in one-on-one sessions as it is in groups. Be prepared to change the focus of sessions in response to events or situations that arise in the parent's life or family. Be flexible too, about taking a longer time than planned to discuss a topic if that's what the parent wants to do.

Agreements for working together

Although the agreements you make in a one-on-one situation may be a bit different than what a group might agree on, the intent is the same – the facilitator and the participant are deciding on what they need to feel safe and comfortable in the program. See “Planning the First Session” in Section 8 for information on making agreements for working together.

Main part

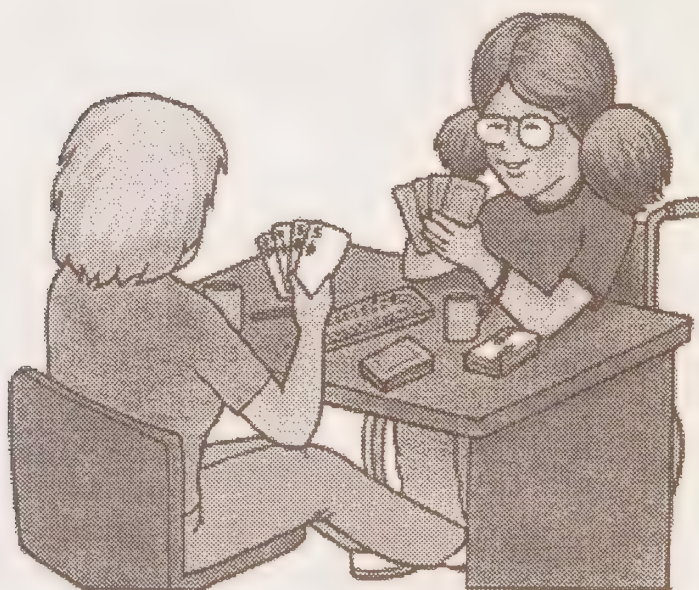
It is tempting in one-on-one sessions to simply “talk” to the parent. By thinking carefully about what you want to accomplish, you can create activities that are interactive, informal and work well in one-on-one situations.

While planning your sessions, keep in mind that most activities will take much less time in a one-on-one session than in a group. Also keep in mind the importance of reflecting the experiential learning cycle in the one-on-one activities you develop.

Closing

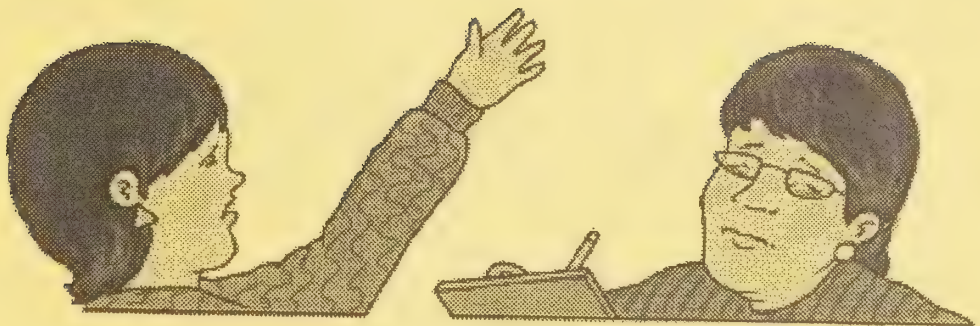
The closing to a one-on-one session includes the same activities and serves the same purpose as in a group session. It offers the parent the opportunity to notice what happened during the session, reflect on it and consider what it means for him or her, and think about how it can be applied in daily life and parenting. A conclusion includes:

- A summary of what was covered. (Notice)
- An opportunity for the parent to reflect on what she felt or learned in the session (Relate) and how this relates to her life and parenting (Apply)
- Monitoring of how the session went
- Input from the parent on the content of the next session
- Ongoing support. In one-on-one sessions, there is no direct source of mutual support. In this case, follow-up could be encouraging the parent to participate in some activity that will bring her into contact with other parents – for example, attending a play group, taking her child to storytime at the local library or visiting a family resource centre.



Section 11

Checklists and forms



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Checklists and forms

- Checklists
 - ♦ Meeting Room Facilities
 - ♦ Equipment
- Parent Information Form
- Planning Sheets
 - ♦ Program Planning Sheet
 - ♦ Session Planning Sheet
- Logs
 - ♦ Session Log
 - ♦ Program Log
- Evaluation Forms
- Certificate of Participation
- Problem-Solving Steps

Photocopy these forms and use as many as you need.

Or use them as a source of ideas and make your own customized materials.

Checklist: Meeting Room Facilities

Location

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: (_____) _____

Contact person: _____

Is this facility:

- _____ Easy for all parents to get to?
- _____ Close to public transportation?
- _____ Open during the hours you need it?
- _____ Reasonably quiet during the hours you'll be using it? (No other noisy activities going on at the same time – for example, a basketball game right above your meeting room.)

Does this facility have:

- _____ Enough parking space?
- _____ A room big enough for several small groups to talk without disturbing one another?
- _____ Comfortable heating and ventilation?
- _____ Kitchen facilities?
- _____ Toilet facilities?
- _____ A safe space that can be used for child care?
- _____ Child care facilities? (Toys, games, a playground?)
- _____ Enough chairs for the group?
- _____ Chairs that can be moved around?
- _____ Tables?
- _____ Accessible light switches and thermostat? (Can you turn the lights on and off and adjust the heat?)

Some other things to ask about:

- Will the building or room be locked? If so, how do you get the key?
- How much clean-up is expected after your session? (For example, are you expected to sweep the floor or move the chairs back into a certain position?)
- Do you have to be cleaned up and out of the building by a certain time?
- Can you leave materials in the room from one session to the next?

Equipment Checklist

Equipment	Available at the facility	I need to bring it
blackboard		
chalk		
flip chart stand		
flip chart paper		
markers		
tape		
VCR and TV		
extension cord		

Parent Information Form

Date _____ Location _____

Facilitators (contact information) _____

Name Address Phone number	Knows time, date place	Ages of Children	Needs Child Care	Needs Transportation	Record of sessions attended

Program Planning Sheet

SESSION # 1	SESSION # 2	SESSION # 3
Topics	Topics	Topics
Ideas	Ideas	Ideas
SESSION # 4	SESSION # 5	SESSION # 6
Topics	Topics	Topics
Ideas	Ideas	Ideas
SESSION # 7	SESSION # 8	SESSION # 9
Topics	Topics	Topics
Ideas	Ideas	Ideas

Session Planning Sheet

Session # _____ of _____

Date: _____

Learning Objectives

The parents will have an opportunity to:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Time	Topic	Activities	Nobody's Perfect Books	Equipment Resources Reminders

Time	Topic	Activities	Nobody's Perfect Books	Equipment Resources Reminders

Session Log

Completed by: _____

Session # _____ of _____
Topics
Overall feelings about the session:
What went well?
What I'd do differently the next time:
What I learned as a facilitator:
Unfinished business/things we need to continue with next session:

Program Log

Completed by: _____

Program Dates:

Program Location:

Time spent in preparation before program started:

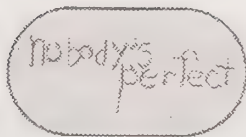
High points for you as a facilitator:

Low points for you as a facilitator:

What did the group seem to like most about the program?

What did they like least?

Things to note for the next program:



Tell us what you think about Nobody's Perfect.

Your ideas will help us make this program even better!

What session or idea from Nobody's Perfect was most useful to you?

What do you see, do or think about differently after coming to Nobody's Perfect?

What new tool do you have as a parent?

What was not useful to you?

What do we need to know about to make Nobody's Perfect even better?

What would you tell a friend about Nobody's Perfect?

Nobody's Perfect Evaluation Form

What did you
want to learn?



What new things did
you learn?



Did you like the program?

not at all

1

2

3

4

very much

5



I liked ...



I did not like ...

Would you tell a friend about
this program? Why?

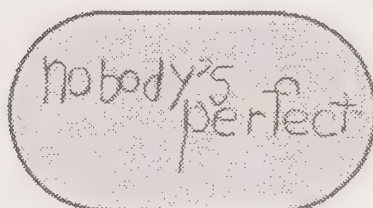


Comments



Ottawa-Carleton

Certificate of Participation



Nobody's Perfect parents value these acknowledgments of their participation in the program.

Find out whether your organization, community, province or territory has designed a form for this purpose. If not, the certificate included here is a sample. You can make copies of it and add parents' names. If you have access to a computer, you can design your own certificate with the name and logo of your sponsoring organization, the dates of the program and the Nobody's Perfect logo.

If you can afford it, you can have very attractive certificates designed and printed in colour.

Even if you can't afford colour printing, you can copy the certificates on fancy marbled or parchment paper or use paper with built-in borders.

Make these certificates as attractive and special as you can afford. The more special the certificate, the more valued the participants will feel.



Presented to

who has participated in the Nobody's Perfect Program

at

Date _____ Facilitator(s) _____

*Nobody's Perfect. There are no perfect parents, or perfect children or perfect people.
We can only do our best.*

Four Steps for Solving Problems

- 1. What's happening here?**
- 2. Why is it happening?**
- 3. What can I do?**
- 4. What if it doesn't work?**

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